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FIG. 1—*Granite statue of Rameses II*  
Turin Museum Italy

# THE STORY OF CIVILIZATION

## I. Our Oriental Heritage

*Being a history of civilization in Egypt and the Near East  
to the death of Alexander, and in India, China and Japan  
from the beginning to our own day; with an introduction  
on the nature and foundations of civilization*

By Will Durant

VOLUME I



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## Preface

I HAVE tried in this book to accomplish the first part of a pleasant assignment which I rashly laid upon myself some twenty years ago: to write a history of civilization. I wish to tell as much as I can, in as little space as I can, of the contributions that genius and labor have made to the cultural heritage of mankind—to chronicle and contemplate, in their causes, character and effects, the advances of invention, the varieties of economic organization, the experiments in government, the aspirations of religion, the mutations of morals and manners, the masterpieces of literature, the development of science, the wisdom of philosophy, and the achievements of art. I do not need to be told how absurd this enterprise is, nor how immodest is its very conception; for many years of effort have brought it to but a fifth of its completion, and have made it clear that no one mind, and no single lifetime, can adequately compass this task. Nevertheless I have dreamed that despite the many errors inevitable in this undertaking, it may be of some use to those upon whom the passion for philosophy has laid the compulsion to try to see things whole, to pursue perspective, unity and understanding through history in time, as well as to seek them through science in space.

I have long felt that our usual method of writing history in separate longitudinal sections—economic history, political history, religious history, the history of philosophy, the history of literature, the history of science, the history of music, the history of art—does injustice to the unity of human life; that history should be written collaterally as well as lineally, synthetically as well as analytically; and that the ideal historiography would seek to portray in each period the total complex of a nation's culture, institutions, adventures and ways. But the accumulation of knowledge has divided history, like science, into a thousand isolated specialties; and prudent scholars have refrained from attempting any view of the whole—whether of the material universe, or of the living past of our race. For the probability of error increases with the scope of the undertaking, and any man who sells his soul to synthesis will be a tragic target for a myriad merry darts of specialist critique. "Consider," said Ptah-hotep five thousand years ago, "how thou mayest be opposed by an expert in council. It is

## P R E F A C E

foolish to speak on every kind of work."\* A history of civilization shares the presumptuousness of every philosophical enterprise: it offers the ridiculous spectacle of a fragment expounding the whole. Like philosophy, such a venture has no rational excuse, and is at best but a brave stupidity; but let us hope that, like philosophy, it will always lure some rash spirits into its fatal depths.

The plan of the series is to narrate the history of civilization in five independent parts:

- I. *Our Oriental Heritage*: a history of civilization in Egypt and the Near East to the death of Alexander, and in India, China and Japan to the present day; with an introduction on the nature and elements of civilization.
- II. *Our Classical Heritage*: a history of civilization in Greece and Rome, and of civilization in the Near East under Greek and Roman domination.
- III. *Our Medieval Heritage*: Catholic and feudal Europe, Byzantine civilization, Mohammedan and Judaic culture in Asia, Africa and Spain, and the Italian Renaissance.
- IV. *Our European Heritage*: the cultural history of the European states from the Protestant Reformation to the French Revolution.
- V. *Our Modern Heritage*: the history of European invention and statesmanship, science and philosophy, religion and morals, literature and art from the accession of Napoleon to our own times.

Our story begins with the Orient, not merely because Asia was the scene of the oldest civilizations known to us, but because those civilizations formed the background and basis of that Greek and Roman culture which Sir Henry Maine mistakenly supposed to be the whole source of the modern mind. We shall be surprised to learn how much of our most indispensable inventions, our economic and political organization, our science and our literature, our philosophy and our religion, goes back to Egypt and the Orient.† At this historic moment—when the ascendancy of Europe is so rapidly coming to an end, when Asia is swelling with resurrected life, and the theme of the twentieth century seems destined to be an all-embrac-

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\* Cf. p. 193 below.

† The contributions of the Orient to our cultural heritage are summed up in the concluding pages of this volume.

## PREFACE

ing conflict between the East and the West—the provincialism of our traditional histories, which began with Greece and summed up Asia in a line, has become no merely academic error, but a possibly fatal failure of perspective and intelligence. The future faces into the Pacific, and understanding must follow it there.

But how shall an Occidental mind ever understand the Orient? Eight years of study and travel have only made this, too, more evident—that not even a lifetime of devoted scholarship would suffice to initiate a Western student into the subtle character and secret lore of the East. Every chapter, every paragraph in this book will offend or amuse some patriotic or esoteric soul: the orthodox Jew will need all his ancient patience to forgive the pages on Yahveh; the metaphysical Hindu will mourn this superficial scratching of Indian philosophy; and the Chinese or Japanese sage will smile indulgently at these brief and inadequate selections from the wealth of Far Eastern literature and thought. Some of the errors in the chapter on Judea have been corrected by Professor Harry Wolfson of Harvard; Dr. Ananda Coomaraswamy of the Boston Institute of Fine Arts has given the section on India a most painstaking revision, but must not be held responsible for the conclusions I have reached or the errors that remain; Professor H. H. Gowen, the learned Orientalist of the University of Washington, and Upton Close, whose knowledge of the Orient seems inexhaustible, have checked the more flagrant mistakes in the chapters on China and Japan; and Mr. George Sokolsky has given to the pages on contemporary affairs in the Far East the benefit of his first-hand information. Should the public be indulgent enough to call for a second edition of this book, the opportunity will be taken to incorporate whatever further corrections may be suggested by critics, specialists and readers. Meanwhile a weary author may sympathize with Tai T'ung, who in the thirteenth century issued his *History of Chinese Writing* with these words: "Were I to await perfection, my book would never be finished."\*

Since these ear-minded times are not propitious for the popularity of expensive books on remote subjects of interest only to citizens of the world, it may be that the continuation of this series will be delayed by the prosaic necessities of economic life. But if the reception of this adventure in synthesis makes possible an uninterrupted devotion to the undertaking, Part Two should be ready by the fall of 1940, and its successors should appear,

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\* Carter, T. F., *The Invention of Printing in China, and Its Spread Westward*; New York, 1925, p. xviii.

## PREFACE

by the grace of health, at five-year intervals thereafter. Nothing would make me happier than to be freed, for this work, from every other literary enterprise. I shall proceed as rapidly as time and circumstance will permit, hoping that a few of my contemporaries will care to grow old with me while learning, and that these volumes may help some of our children to understand and enjoy the infinite riches of their inheritance.

WILL DURANT.

Great Neck, N. Y., March, 1935

## A NOTE ON THE USE OF THIS BOOK

To bring these volumes into smaller compass certain technical passages, which may prove difficult for the general reader, have been printed (like this paragraph) in reduced type. Despite much compression the book is still too long, and the font of reduced type has not sufficed to indicate all the dull passages. I trust that the reader will not attempt more than a chapter at a time.

Indented passages in reduced type are quotations. The raised numbers refer to the Notes at the end of the second volume; to facilitate reference to these Notes the number of the chapter is given at the head of each page. An occasional hiatus in the numbering of the Notes was caused by abbreviating the printed text. The books referred to in the Notes are more fully described in the Bibliography, whose starred titles may serve as a guide to further reading. The Glossary defines all foreign words used in the text. The Index pronounces It reign names, and gives biographical dates.

It should be added that this book has no relation to, and makes no use of, a big graphical *Story of Civilization* prepared for newspaper publication in 1927.

-28.

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Breasted, Arthur, *170 Chinese Poems*; Alfred A. Knopf.

Scribner, Jas. H., *The Development of Religion and Thought in Ancient Egypt*; Obata, S. S.

Tietjens, Shigeyoshi, *Works of Li Po*; E. P. Dutton.

Van Der Eyn, Eunice, *Poetry of the Orient*; Alfred A. Knopf.

"Upton," Mark, *Anthology of World Poetry*; the Literary Guild.

"Close," unpublished translations of Chinese poems.

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## INTRODUCTION

# THE ESTABLISHMENT OF CIVILIZATION

"I want to know what were the steps by  
which men passed from barbarism to  
civilization."

—VOLTAIRE.<sup>1</sup>



## CHAPTER I

# The Conditions of Civilization\*

*Definition—Geological conditions—Geographical—Economic—  
Racial—Psychological—Causes of the decay of civilizations*

CIVILIZATION is social order promoting cultural creation. Four elements constitute it: economic provision, political organization, moral traditions, and the pursuit of knowledge and the arts. It begins where chaos and insecurity end. For when fear is overcome, curiosity and constructiveness are free, and man passes by natural impulse towards the understanding and embellishment of life.

Certain factors condition civilization, and may encourage or impede it. First, geological conditions. Civilization is an interlude between ice ages: at any time the current of glaciation may rise again, cover with ice and stone the works of man, and reduce life to some narrow segment of the earth. Or the demon of earthquake, by whose leave we build our cities, may shrug his shoulders and consume us indifferently.

Second, geographical conditions. The heat of the tropics, and the innumerable parasites that infest them, are hostile to civilization; lethargy and disease, and a precocious maturity and decay, divert the energies from those inessentials of life that make civilization, and absorb them in hunger and reproduction; nothing is left for the play of the arts and the mind. Rain is necessary; for water is the medium of life, more important even than the light of the sun; the unintelligible whim of the elements may condemn to desiccation regions that once flourished with empire and industry, like Nineveh or Babylon, or may help to swift strength and wealth cities apparently off the main line of transport and communication, like those of Great Britain or Puget Sound. If the soil is fertile in food or minerals, if rivers offer an easy avenue of exchange, if the coast-line is indented with natural harbors for a commercial fleet, if, above all, a nation lies on the highroad of the world's trade, like Athens or Carthage, Flor-

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\* The reader will find, at the end of the second volume, a glossary defining foreign terms, a bibliography with guidance for further reading, a pronouncing index, and a body of references corresponding to the superior figures in the text.



ence or Venice—then geography, though it can never create it, smiles upon civilization, and nourishes it.

Economic conditions are more important. A people may possess ordered institutions, a lofty moral code, and even a flair for the minor forms of art, like the American Indians; and yet if it remains in the hunting stage, if it depends for its existence upon the precarious fortunes of the chase, it will never quite pass from barbarism to civilization. A nomad stock, like the Bedouins of Arabia, may be exceptionally intelligent and vigorous, it may display high qualities of character like courage, generosity and nobility; but without that simple *sine qua non* of culture, a continuity of food, its intelligence will be lavished on the perils of the hunt and the tricks of trade, and nothing will remain for the laces and frills, the curtsies and amenities, the arts and comforts, of civilization. The first form of culture is agriculture. It is when man settles down to till the soil and lay up provisions for the uncertain future that he finds time and reason to be civilized. Within that little circle of security—a reliable supply of water and food—he builds his huts, his temples and his schools; he invents productive tools, and domesticates the dog, the ass, the pig, at last himself. He learns to work with regularity and order, maintains a longer tenure of life, and transmits more completely than before the mental and moral heritage of his race.

Culture suggests agriculture, but civilization suggests the city. In one aspect civilization is the habit of civility; and civility is the refinement which townsmen, who made the word, thought possible only in the *civitas* or city.\* For in the city are gathered, rightly or wrongly, the wealth and brains produced in the countryside; in the city invention and industry multiply comforts, luxuries and leisure; in the city traders meet, and barter goods and ideas; in that cross-fertilization of minds at the cross-roads of trade intelligence is sharpened and stimulated to creative power. In the city some men are set aside from the making of material things, and produce science and philosophy, literature and art. Civilization begins in the peasant's hut, but it comes to flower only in the towns.

There are no racial conditions to civilization. It may appear on any continent and in any color: at Peking or Delhi, at Memphis or Babylon, at Ravenna or London, in Peru or Yucatan. It is not the great race that makes

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\* The word civilization (Latin *civilis*—pertaining to the *civis*, citizen) is comparatively young. Despite Boswell's suggestion Johnson refused to admit it to his Dictionary in 1772; he preferred to use the word *civility*."

the civilization, it is the great civilization that makes the people; circumstances geographical and economic create a culture, and the culture creates a type. The Englishman does not make British civilization, it makes him; if he carries it with him wherever he goes, and dresses for dinner in Timbuktu, it is not that he is creating his civilization there anew, but that he acknowledges even there its mastery over his soul. Given like material conditions, and another race would beget like results; Japan reproduces in the twentieth century the history of England in the nineteenth. Civilization is related to race only in the sense that it is often preceded by the slow intermarriage of different stocks, and their gradual assimilation into a relatively homogeneous people.\*

These physical and biological conditions are only prerequisites to civilization; they do not constitute or generate it. Subtle psychological factors must enter into play. There must be political order, even if it be so near to chaos as in Renaissance Florence or Rome; men must feel, by and large, that they need not look for death or taxes at every turn. There must be some unity of language to serve as a medium of mental exchange. Through church, or family, or school, or otherwise, there must be a unifying moral code, some rules of the game of life acknowledged even by those who violate them, and giving to conduct some order and regularity, some direction and stimulus. Perhaps there must also be some unity of basic belief, some faith, supernatural or utopian, that lifts morality from calculation to devotion, and gives life nobility and significance despite our mortal brevity. And finally there must be education—some technique, however primitive, for the transmission of culture. Whether through imitation, initiation or instruction, whether through father or mother, teacher or priest, the lore and heritage of the tribe—its language and knowledge, its morals and manners, its technology and arts—must be handed down to the young, as the very instrument through which they are turned from animals into men.

The disappearance of these conditions—sometimes of even one of them—may destroy a civilization. A geological cataclysm or a profound climatic change; an uncontrolled epidemic like that which wiped out half the population of the Roman Empire under the Antonines, or the Black Death that helped to end the Feudal Age; the exhaustion of the land, or the ruin

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\* Blood, as distinct from race, may affect a civilization in the sense that a nation may be retarded or advanced by breeding from the biologically (not racially) worse or better strains among the people.

of agriculture through the exploitation of the country by the town, resulting in a precarious dependence upon foreign food supplies; the failure of natural resources, either of fuels or of raw materials; a change in trade routes, leaving a nation off the main line of the world's commerce; mental or moral decay from the strains, stimuli and contacts of urban life, from the breakdown of traditional sources of social discipline and the inability to replace them; the weakening of the stock by a disorderly sexual life, or by an epicurean, pessimist, or quietist philosophy; the decay of leadership through the infertility of the able, and the relative smallness of the families that might bequeath most fully the cultural inheritance of the race; a pathological concentration of wealth, leading to class wars, disruptive revolutions, and financial exhaustion: these are some of the ways in which a civilization may die. For civilization is not something inborn or imperishable; it must be acquired anew by every generation, and any serious interruption in its financing or its transmission may bring it to an end. Man differs from the beast only by education, which may be defined as the technique of transmitting civilization.

Civilizations are the generations of the racial soul. As family-rearing, and then writing, bound the generations together, handing down the lore of the dying to the young, so print and commerce and a thousand ways of communication may bind the civilizations together, and preserve for future cultures all that is of value for them in our own. Let us, before we die, gather up our heritage, and offer it to our children.

## The Economic Elements of Civilization \*

IN one important sense the "savage," too, is civilized, for he carefully transmits to his children the heritage of the tribe—that complex of economic, political, mental and moral habits and institutions which it has developed in its efforts to maintain and enjoy itself on the earth. It is impossible to be scientific here; for in calling other human beings "savage" or "barbarous" we may be expressing no objective fact, but only our fierce fondness for ourselves, and our timid shyness in the presence of alien ways. Doubtless we underestimate these simple peoples, who have so much to teach us in hospitality and morals; if we list the bases and constituents of civilization we shall find that the naked nations invented or arrived at all but one of them, and left nothing for us to add except embellishments and writing. Perhaps they, too, were once civilized, and desisted from it as a nuisance. We must make sparing use of such terms as "savage" and "barbarous" in referring to our "contemporaneous ancestry." Preferably we shall call "primitive" all tribes that make little or no provision for unproductive days, and little or no use of writing. In contrast, the civilized may be defined as literate providers.

### I. FROM HUNTING TO TILLAGE

*Primitive improvidence—Beginnings of provision—Hunting and fishing—Herding—The domestication of animals—Agriculture—Food—Cooking—Cannibalism*

"Three meals a day are a highly advanced institution. Savages gorge themselves or fast." The wilder tribes among the American Indians con-

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\* Despite recent high example to the contrary,<sup>1</sup> the word *civilization* will be used in this volume to mean social organization, moral order, and cultural activity; while *culture* will mean, according to the context, either the practice of manners and the arts, or the sum-total of a people's institutions, customs and arts. It is in the latter sense that the word *culture* will be used in reference to primitive or prehistoric societies.

sidered it weak-kneed and unseemly to preserve food for the next day.' The natives of Australia are incapable of any labor whose reward is not immediate; every Hottentot is a gentleman of leisure; and with the Bushmen of Africa it is always "either a feast or a famine." There is a mute wisdom in this improvidence, as in many "savage" ways. The moment man begins to take thought of the morrow he passes out of the Garden of Eden into the vale of anxiety; the pale cast of worry settles down upon him, greed is sharpened, property begins, and the good cheer of the "thoughtless" native disappears. The American Negro is making this transition today. "Of what are you thinking?" Peary asked one of his Eskimo guides. "I do not have to think," was the answer; "I have plenty of meat." Not to think unless we have to—there is much to be said for this as the summation of wisdom.

Nevertheless, there were difficulties in this carelessness, and those organisms that outgrew it came to possess a serious advantage in the struggle for survival. The dog that buried the bone which even a canine appetite could not manage, the squirrel that gathered nuts for a later feast, the bees that filled the comb with honey, the ants that laid up stores for a rainy day—these were among the first creators of civilization. It was they, or other subtle creatures like them, who taught our ancestors the art of providing for tomorrow out of the surplus of today, or of preparing for winter in summer's time of plenty.

With what skill those ancestors ferreted out, from land and sea, the food that was the basis of their simple societies! They grubbed edible things from the earth with bare hands; they imitated or used the claws and tusks of the animals, and fashioned tools out of ivory, bone or stone; they made nets and traps and snares of rushes or fibre, and devised innumerable artifices for fishing and hunting their prey. The Polynesians had nets a thousand ells long, which could be handled only by a hundred men; in such ways economic provision grew hand in hand with political organization, and the united quest for food helped to generate the state. The Tlingit fisherman put upon his head a cap like the head of a seal, and hiding his body among the rocks, made a noise like a seal; seals came toward him, and he speared them with the clear conscience of primitive war. Many tribes threw narcotics into the streams to stupefy the fish into coöperation with the fishermen; the Tahitians, for example, put into the water an intoxicating mixture prepared from the *buteo* nut or the *hora* plant; the fish, drunk with it, floated leisurely on the surface, and were caught at the

anglers' will. Australian natives, swimming under water while breathing through a reed, pulled ducks beneath the surface by the legs, and gently held them there till they were pacified. The Tarahumaras caught birds by stringing kernels on tough fibres half buried under the ground; the birds ate the kernels, and the Tarahumaras ate the birds."

Hunting is now to most of us a game, whose relish seems based upon some mystic remembrance, in the blood, of ancient days when to hunter as well as hunted it was a matter of life and death. For hunting was not merely a quest for food, it was a war for security and mastery, a war beside which all the wars of recorded history are but a little noise. In the jungle man still fights for his life, for though there is hardly an animal that will attack him unless it is desperate for food or cornered in the chase, yet there is not always food for all, and sometimes only the fighter, or the breeder of fighters, is allowed to eat. We see in our museums the relics of that war of the species in the knives, clubs, spears, arrows, lassos, bolas, lures, traps, boomerangs and slings with which primitive men won possession of the land, and prepared to transmit to an ungrateful posterity the gift of security from every beast except man. Even today, after all these wars of elimination, how many different populations move over the earth! Sometimes, during a walk in the woods, one is awed by the variety of languages spoken there, by the myriad species of insects, reptiles, carnivores and birds; one feels that man is an interloper on this crowded scene, that he is the object of universal dread and endless hostility. Some day, perhaps, these chattering quadrupeds, these ingratiating centipedes, these insinuating bacilli, will devour man and all his works, and free the planet from this marauding biped, these mysterious and unnatural weapons, these careless feet!

Hunting and fishing were not stages in economic development, they were modes of activity destined to survive into the highest forms of civilized society. Once the center of life, they are still its hidden foundations; behind our literature and philosophy, our ritual and art, stand the stout killers of Packingtown. We do our hunting by proxy, not having the stomach for honest killing in the fields; but our memories of the chase linger in our joyful pursuit of anything weak or fugitive, and in the games of our children—even in the word *game*. In the last analysis civilization is based upon the food supply. The cathedral and the capitol, the museum and the concert chamber, the library and the university are the façade; in the rear are the shambles.

To live by hunting was not original; if man had confined himself to that he would have been just another carnivore. He began to be human when out of the uncertain hunt he developed the greater security and continuity of the pastoral life. For this involved advantages of high importance: the domestication of animals, the breeding of cattle, and the use of milk. We do not know when or how domestication began—perhaps when the helpless young of slain beasts were spared and brought to the camp as playthings for the children.<sup>6</sup> The animal continued to be eaten, but not so soon; it acted as a beast of burden, but it was accepted almost democratically into the society of man; it became his comrade, and formed with him a community of labor and residence. The miracle of reproduction was brought under control, and two captives were multiplied into a herd. Animal milk released women from prolonged nursing, lowered infantile mortality, and provided a new and dependable food. Population increased, life became more stable and orderly, and the mastery of that timid *parvenu*, man, became more secure on the earth.

Meanwhile woman was making the greatest economic discovery of all—the bounty of the soil. While man hunted she grubbed about the tent or hut for whatever edible things lay ready to her hand on the ground. In Australia it was understood that during the absence of her mate on the chase the wife would dig for roots, pluck fruit and nuts from the trees, and collect honey, mushrooms, seeds and natural grains.<sup>7</sup> Even today, in certain tribes of Australia, the grains that grow spontaneously out of the earth are harvested without any attempt to separate and sow the seed; the Indians of the Sacramento River Valley never advanced beyond this stage.<sup>8</sup> We shall never discover when men first noted the function of the seed, and turned collecting into sowing; such beginnings are the mysteries of history, about which we may believe and guess, but cannot know. It is possible that when men began to collect unplanted grains, seeds fell along the way between field and camp, and suggested at last the great secret of growth. The Juangs threw the seeds together into the ground, leaving them to find their own way up. The natives of Borneo put the seed into holes which they dug with a pointed stick as they walked the fields.<sup>9</sup> The simplest known culture of the earth is with this stick or “digger.” In Madagascar fifty years ago the traveler could still see women armed with pointed sticks, standing in a row like soldiers, and then, at a signal, digging their sticks into the ground, turning over the soil, throwing in the seed, stamping the earth flat, and passing on to another furrow.<sup>10</sup> The second stage in

complexity was culture with the hoe: the digging stick was tipped with bone, and fitted with a crosspiece to receive the pressure of the foot. When the Conquistadores arrived in Mexico they found that the Aztecs knew no other tool of tillage than the hoe. With the domestication of animals and the forging of metals a heavier implement could be used; the hoe was enlarged into a plough, and the deeper turning of the soil revealed a fertility in the earth that changed the whole career of man. Wild plants were domesticated, new varieties were developed, old varieties were improved.

Finally nature taught man the art of provision, the virtue of prudence,\* the concept of time. Watching woodpeckers storing acorns in the trees, and the bees storing honey in hives, man conceived—perhaps after milleniums of improvident savagery—the notion of laying up food for the future. He found ways of preserving meat by smoking it, salting it, freezing it; better still, he built granaries secure from rain and damp, vermin and thieves, and gathered food into them for the leaner months of the year. Slowly it became apparent that agriculture could provide a better and steadier food supply than hunting. With that realization man took one of the three steps that led from the beast to civilization—speech, agriculture, and writing.

It is not to be supposed that man passed suddenly from hunting to tillage. Many tribes, like the American Indians, remained permanently becalmed in the transition—the men given to the chase, the women tilling the soil. Not only was the change presumably gradual, but it was never complete. Man merely added a new way of securing food to an old way; and for the most part, throughout his history, he has preferred the old food to the new. We picture early man experimenting with a thousand products of the earth to find, at much cost to his inward comfort, which of them could be eaten safely; mingling these more and more with the fruits and nuts, the flesh and fish he was accustomed to, but always yearning for the booty of the chase. Primitive peoples are ravenously fond of meat, even when they live mainly on cereals, vegetables and milk.<sup>21</sup> If they come upon the carcass of a recently dead animal the result is likely to be a wild debauch. Very often no time is wasted on cooking; the prey is eaten raw, as fast as good teeth can tear and devour it; soon nothing is left but the bones. Whole tribes have been known to feast for a week on a

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\* Note the ultimate identity of the words *provision*, *providence* and *prudence*.



whale thrown up on the shore.<sup>12</sup> Though the Fuegians can cook, they prefer their meat raw; when they catch a fish they kill it by biting it behind the gills, and then consume it from head to tail without further ritual.<sup>13</sup> The uncertainty of the food supply made these nature peoples almost literally omnivorous: shellfish, sea urchins, frogs, toads, snails, mice, rats, spiders, earthworms, scorpions, moths, centipedes, locusts, caterpillars, lizards, snakes, boas, dogs, horses, roots, lice, insects, larvæ, the eggs of reptiles and birds—there is not one of these but was somewhere a delicacy, or even a *pièce de résistance*, to primitive men.<sup>14</sup> Some tribes are expert hunters of ants; others dry insects in the sun and then store them for a feast; others pick the lice out of one another's hair, and eat them with relish; if a great number of lice can be gathered to make a *petite marmite*, they are devoured with shouts of joy, as enemies of the human race.<sup>15</sup> The menu of the lower hunting tribes hardly differs from that of the higher apes.<sup>16</sup>

The discovery of fire limited this indiscriminate voracity, and coöperated with agriculture to free man from the chase. Cooking broke down the cellulose and starch of a thousand plants indigestible in their raw state, and man turned more and more to cereals and vegetables as his chief reliance. At the same time cooking, by softening tough foods, reduced the need of chewing, and began that decay of the teeth which is one of the insignia of civilization.

To all the varied articles of diet that we have enumerated, man added the greatest delicacy of all—his fellowman. Cannibalism was at one time practically universal; it has been found in nearly all primitive tribes, and among such later peoples as the Irish, the Iberians, the Picts, and the eleventh-century Danes.<sup>17</sup> Among many tribes human flesh was a staple of trade, and funerals were unknown. In the Upper Congo living men, women and children were bought and sold frankly as articles of food;<sup>18</sup> on the island of New Britain human meat was sold in shops as butcher's meat is sold among ourselves; and in some of the Solomon Islands human victims, preferably women, were fattened for a feast like pigs.<sup>19</sup> The Fuegians ranked women above dogs because, they said, "dogs taste of otter." In Tahiti an old Polynesian chief explained his diet to Pierre Loti: "The white man, when well roasted, tastes like a ripe banana." The Fijians, however, complained that the flesh of the whites was too salty and tough, and that a European sailor was hardly fit to eat; a Polynesian tasted better.<sup>20</sup>

What was the origin of this practice? There is no surety that the custom arose, as formerly supposed, out of a shortage of other food; if it did, the taste once formed survived the shortage, and became a passionate predilection.<sup>22</sup> Everywhere among nature peoples blood is regarded as a delicacy—never with horror; even primitive vegetarians take to it with gusto. Human blood is constantly drunk by tribes otherwise kindly and generous; sometimes as medicine, sometimes as a rite or covenant, often in the belief that it will add to the drinker the vital force of the victim.<sup>23</sup> No shame was felt in preferring human flesh; primitive man seems to have recognized no distinction in morals between eating men and eating other animals. In Melanesia the chief who could treat his friends to a dish of roast man soared in social esteem. "When I have slain an enemy," explained a Brazilian philosopher-chief, "it is surely better to eat him than to let him waste. . . . The worst is not to be eaten, but to die; if I am killed it is all the same whether my tribal enemy eats me or not. But I could not think of any game that would taste better than he would. . . . You whites are really too dainty."<sup>24</sup>

Doubtless the custom had certain social advantages. It anticipated Dean Swift's plan for the utilization of superfluous children, and it gave the old an opportunity to die usefully. There is a point of view from which funerals seem an unnecessary extravagance. To Montaigne it appeared more barbarous to torture a man to death under the cover of piety, as was the mode of his time, than to roast and eat him after he was dead. We must respect one another's delusions.

## II. THE FOUNDATIONS OF INDUSTRY

### *Fire—Primitive Tools—Weaving and pottery—Building and transport—Trade and finance*

If man began with speech, and civilization with agriculture, industry began with fire. Man did not invent it; probably nature produced the marvel for him by the friction of leaves or twigs, a stroke of lightning, or a chance union of chemicals; man merely had the saving wit to imitate nature, and to improve upon her. He put the wonder to a thousand uses. First, perhaps, he made it serve as a torch to conquer his fearsome enemy, the dark; then he used it for warmth, and moved more freely from his native tropics to less enervating zones, slowly making the planet human; then he applied it to metals, softening them, tempering them, and com-

binning them into forms stronger and suppler than those in which they had come to his hand. So beneficent and strange was it that fire always remained a miracle to primitive man, fit to be worshiped as a god; he offered it countless ceremonies of devotion, and made it the center or focus (which is Latin for hearth) of his life and home; he carried it carefully with him as he moved from place to place in his wanderings, and would not willingly let it die. Even the Romans punished with death the careless vestal virgin who allowed the sacred fire to be extinguished.

Meanwhile, in the midst of hunting, herding and agriculture, invention was busy, and the primitive brain was racking itself to find mechanical answers to the economic puzzles of life. At first man was content, apparently, to accept what nature offered him—the fruits of the earth as his food, the skins and furs of the animals as his clothing, the caves in the hillsides as his home. Then, *perhaps* (for most history is guessing, and the rest is prejudice), he imitated the tools and industry of the animal: he saw the monkey flinging rocks and fruit upon his enemies, or breaking open nuts and oysters with a stone; he saw the beaver building a dam, the birds making nests and bowers, the chimpanzees raising something very like a hut. He envied the power of their claws, teeth, tusks and horns, and the toughness of their hides; and he set to work to fashion tools and weapons that would resemble and rival these. Man, said Franklin, is a tool-using animal;<sup>24</sup> but this, too, like the other distinctions on which we plume ourselves, is only a difference of degree.

Many tools lay potential in the plant world that surrounded primitive man. From the bamboo he made shafts, knives, needles and bottles; out of branches he made tongs, pincers and vices; from bark and fibres he wove cord and clothing of a hundred kinds. Above all, he made himself a stick. It was a modest invention, but its uses were so varied that man always looked upon it as a symbol of power and authority, from the wand of the fairies and the staff of the shepherd to the rod of Moses or Aaron, the ivory cane of the Roman consul, the *lituus* of the augurs, and the mace of the magistrate or the king. In agriculture the stick became the hoe; in war it became the lance or javelin or spear, the sword or bayonet.<sup>25</sup> Again, man used the mineral world, and shaped stones into a museum of arms and implements: hammers, anvils, kettles, scrapers, arrow-heads, saws, planes, wedges, levers, axes and drills. From the animal world he made ladles, spoons, vases, gourds, plates, cups, razors and hooks out of the shells of the shore, and tough or dainty tools out of the horn or ivory, the

teeth and bones, the hair and hide of the beasts. Most of these fashioned articles had handles of wood, attached to them in cunning ways, bound with braids of fibre or cords of animal sinew, and occasionally glued with strange mixtures of blood. The ingenuity of primitive men probably equaled—perhaps it surpassed—that of the average modern man; we differ from them through the social accumulation of knowledge, materials and tools, rather than through innate superiority of brains. Indeed, nature men delight in mastering the necessities of a situation with inventive wit. It was a favorite game among the Eskimos to go off into difficult and deserted places, and rival one another in devising means for meeting the needs of a life unequipped and unadorned.<sup>80</sup>

\* This primitive skill displayed itself proudly in the art of weaving. Here, too, the animal showed man the way. The web of the spider, the nest of the bird, the crossing and texture of fibres and leaves in the natural embroidery of the woods, set an example so obvious that in all probability weaving was one of the earliest arts of the human race. Bark, leaves and grass fibres were woven into clothing, carpets and tapestry, sometimes so excellent that it could not be rivaled today, even with the resources of contemporary machinery. Aleutian women may spend a year in weaving one robe. The blankets and garments made by the North American Indians were richly ornamented with fringes and embroideries of hairs and tendon-threads dyed in brilliant colors with berry juice; colors "so alive," says Father Théodot, "that ours do not seem even to approach them."<sup>81</sup> Again art began where nature left off; the bones of birds and fishes, and the slim shoots of the bamboo tree, were polished into needles, and the tendons of animals were drawn into threads delicate enough to pass through the eye of the finest needle today. Bark was beaten into mats and cloths, skins were dried for clothing and shoes, fibres were twisted into the strongest yarn, and supple branches and colored filaments were woven into baskets more beautiful than any modern forms.<sup>82</sup>

Akin to basketry, perhaps born of it, was the art of pottery. Clay placed upon wickerwork to keep the latter from being burned, hardened into a fireproof shell which kept its form when the wickerwork was taken away;<sup>83</sup> this *may have been* the first stage of a development that was to culminate in the perfect porcelains of China. Or perhaps some lumps of clay, baked and hardened by the sun, suggested the ceramic art; it was but a step from this to substitute fire for the sun, and to form from the earth myriad shapes of vessels for every use—for cooking, storing and transporting, at last for

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\* Reduced type, unindented, will be used occasionally for technical or dispensable matter.

luxury and ornament. Designs imprinted by finger-nail or tool upon the wet clay were one of the first forms of art, and perhaps one of the origins of writing.

Out of sun-dried clay primitive tribes made bricks and adobe, and dwelt, so to speak, in pottery. But that was a late stage of the building art, binding the mud hut of the "savage" in a chain of continuous development with the brilliant tiles of Nineveh and Babylon. Some primitive peoples, like the Veddahs of Ceylon, had no dwellings at all, and were content with the earth and the sky; some, like the Tasmanians, slept in hollow trees; some, like the natives of New South Wales, lived in caves; others, like the Bushmen, built here and there a wind-shelter of branches, or, more rarely, drove piles into the soil and covered their tops with moss and twigs. From such wind-shelters, when sides were added, evolved the hut, which is found among the natives of Australia in all its stages from a tiny cottage of branches, grass and earth large enough to cover two or three persons, to great huts housing thirty or more. The nomad hunter or herdsman preferred a tent, which he could carry wherever the chase might lead him. The higher type of nature peoples, like the American Indian, built with wood; the Iroquois, for example, raised, out of timber still bearing the bark, sprawling edifices five hundred feet long, which sheltered many families. Finally, the natives of Oceania made real houses of carefully cut boards, and the evolution of the wooden dwelling was complete.<sup>80</sup>

Only three further developments were needed for primitive man to create all the essentials of economic civilization: the mechanisms of transport, the processes of trade, and the medium of exchange. The porter carrying his load from a modern plane pictures the earliest and latest stages in the history of transportation. In the beginning, doubtless, man was his own beast of burden, unless he was married; to this day, for the most part, in southern and eastern Asia, man is wagon and donkey and all. Then he invented ropes, levers, and pulleys; he conquered and loaded the animal; he made the first sledge by having his cattle draw along the ground long branches bearing his goods;\* he put logs as rollers under the sledge; he cut cross-sections of the log, and made the greatest of all mechanical inventions, the wheel; he put wheels under the sledge and made a cart. Other logs he bound together as rafts, or dug into canoes; and the streams became his most convenient avenues of transport. By land he went first through trackless fields and hills, then by trails, at last by roads. He studied the stars, and guided his caravans across mountains and deserts by tracing

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\* The American Indians, content with this device, never used the wheel.

his route in the sky. He paddled, rowed or sailed his way bravely from island to island, and at last spanned oceans to spread his modest culture from continent to continent. Here, too, the main problems were solved before written history began.

Since human skills and natural resources are diversely and unequally distributed, a people may be enabled, by the development of specific talents, or by its proximity to needed materials, to produce certain articles more cheaply than its neighbors. Of such articles it makes more than it consumes, and offers its surplus to other peoples in exchange for their own; this is the origin of trade. The Chibcha Indians of Colombia exported the rock salt that abounded in their territory, and received in return the cereals that could not be raised on their barren soil. Certain American Indian villages were almost entirely devoted to making arrow-heads; some in New Guinea to making pottery; some in Africa to blacksmithing, or to making boats or lances. Such specializing tribes or villages sometimes acquired the names of their industry (Smith, Fisher, Potter . . .), and these names were in time attached to specializing families.<sup>24</sup> Trade in surpluses was at first by an interchange of gifts; even in our calculating days a present (if only a meal) sometimes precedes or seals a trade. The exchange was facilitated by war, robbery, tribute, fines, and compensation; goods had to be kept moving! Gradually an orderly system of barter grew up, and trading posts, markets and bazaars were established—occasionally, then periodically, then permanently—where those who had some article in excess might offer it for some article of need.<sup>25</sup>

For a long time commerce was purely such exchange, and centuries passed before a circulating medium of value was invented to quicken trade. A Dyak might be seen wandering for days through a bazaar, with a ball of beeswax in his hand, seeking a customer who could offer him in return something that he might more profitably use.<sup>26</sup> The earliest mediums of exchange were articles universally in demand, which anyone would take in payment: dates, salt, skins, furs, ornaments, implements, weapons; in such traffic two knives equaled one pair of stockings, all three equaled a blanket, all four equaled a gun, all five equaled a horse; two elk-teeth equaled one pony, and eight ponies equaled a wife.<sup>27</sup> There is hardly any thing that has not been employed as money by some people at some time: beans, fish-hooks, shells, pearls, beads, cocoa seeds, tea, pepper, at last sheep, pigs, cows, and slaves. Cattle were a convenient standard of value and medium of exchange among hunters and herders; they bore interest

through breeding, and they were easy to carry, since they transported themselves. Even in Homer's days men and things were valued in terms of cattle: the armor of Diomedes was worth nine head of cattle, a skilful slave was worth four. The Romans used kindred words—*pecus* and *pecunia*—for cattle and money, and placed the image of an ox upon their early coins. Our own words *capital*, *chattel* and *cattle* go back through the French to the Latin *capitale*, meaning property: and this in turn derives from *caput*, meaning head—i.e., of cattle. When metals were mined they slowly replaced other articles as standards of value; copper, bronze, iron, finally—because of their convenient representation of great worth in little space and weight—silver and gold, became the money of mankind. The advance from token goods to a metallic currency does not seem to have been made by primitive men; it was left for the historic civilizations to invent coinage and credit, and so, by further facilitating the exchange of surpluses, to increase again the wealth and comfort of man.<sup>66</sup>

### III. ECONOMIC ORGANIZATION

#### *Primitive communism—Causes of its disappearance—Origins of private property—Slavery—Classes*

Trade was the great disturber of the primitive world, for until it came, bringing money and profit in its wake, there was no property, and therefore little government. In the early stages of economic development property was limited for the most part to things personally used; the property sense applied so strongly to such articles that they (even the wife) were often buried with their owner; it applied so weakly to things not personally used that in their case the sense of property, far from being innate, required perpetual reinforcement and inculcation.

Almost everywhere, among primitive peoples, land was owned by the community. The North American Indians, the natives of Peru, the Chittagong Hill tribes of India, the Borneans and South Sea Islanders seem to have owned and tilled the soil in common, and to have shared the fruits together. "The land," said the Omaha Indians, "is like water and wind—what cannot be sold." In Samoa the idea of selling land was unknown prior to the coming of the white man. Professor Rivers found communism in land still existing in Melanesia and Polynesia; and in inner Liberia it may be observed today.<sup>67</sup>

Only less widespread was communism in food. It was usual among

"savages" for the man who had food to share it with the man who had none, for travelers to be fed at any home they chose to stop at on their way, and for communities harassed with drought to be maintained by their neighbors." If a man sat down to his meal in the woods he was expected to call loudly for some one to come and share it with him, before he might justly eat alone." When Turner told a Samoan about the poor in London the "savage" asked in astonishment: "How is it? No food? No friends? No house to live in? Where did he grow? Are there no houses belonging to his friends?"<sup>98</sup> The hungry Indian had but to ask to receive; no matter how small the supply was, food was given him if he needed it; "no one can want food while there is corn anywhere in the town."<sup>99</sup> Among the Hottentots it was the custom for one who had more than others to share his surplus till all were equal. White travelers in Africa before the advent of civilization noted that a present of food or other valuables to a "black man" was at once distributed; so that when a suit of clothes was given to one of them the donor soon found the recipient wearing the hat, a friend the trousers, another friend the coat. The Eskimo hunter had no personal right to his catch; it had to be divided among the inhabitants of the village, and tools and provisions were the common property of all. The North American Indians were described by Captain Carver as "strangers to all distinctions of property, except in the articles of domestic use. . . . They are extremely liberal to each other, and supply the deficiencies of their friends with any superfluity of their own." "What is extremely surprising," reports a missionary, "is to see them treat one another with a gentleness and consideration which one does not find among common people in the most civilized nations. This, doubtless, arises from the fact that the words 'mine' and 'thine,' which St. Chrysostom says extinguish in our hearts the fire of charity and kindle that of greed, are unknown to these savages." "I have seen them," says another observer, "divide game among themselves when they sometimes had many shares to make; and cannot recollect a single instance of their falling into a dispute or finding fault with the distribution as being unequal or otherwise objectionable. They would rather lie down themselves on an empty stomach than have it laid to their charge that they neglected to satisfy the needy. . . . They look upon themselves as but one great family."<sup>100</sup>

Why did this primitive communism disappear as men rose to what we, with some partiality, call civilization? Sumner believed that communism



proved unbiological, a handicap in the struggle for existence; that it gave insufficient stimulus to inventiveness, industry and thrift; and that the failure to reward the more able, and punish the less able, made for a leveling of capacity which was hostile to growth or to successful competition with other groups." Loskiel reported some Indian tribes of the northeast as "so lazy that they plant nothing themselves, but rely entirely upon the expectation that others will not refuse to share their produce with them. Since the industrious thus enjoy no more of the fruits of their labor than the idle, they plant less every year."<sup>4</sup> Darwin thought that the perfect equality among the Fuegians was fatal to any hope of their becoming civilized;<sup>4</sup> or, as the Fuegians might have put it, civilization would have been fatal to their equality. Communism brought a certain security to all who survived the diseases and accidents due to the poverty and ignorance of primitive society; but it did not lift them out of that poverty. Individualism brought wealth, but it brought, also, insecurity and slavery; it stimulated the latent powers of superior men, but it intensified the competition of life, and made men feel bitterly a poverty which, when all shared it alike, had seemed to oppress none.\*

Communism could survive more easily in societies where men were always on the move, and danger and want were ever present. Hunters and herders had no need of private property in land; but when agriculture became the settled life of men it soon appeared that the land was most fruitfully tilled when the rewards of careful husbandry accrued to the family that had provided it. Consequently—since there is a natural selection of institutions and ideas as well as of organisms and groups—the passage from hunting to agriculture brought a change from tribal property to family property; the most economical unit of production became the

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\* Perhaps one reason why communism tends to appear chiefly at the beginning of civilizations is that it flourishes most readily in times of dearth, when the common danger of starvation fuses the individual into the group. When abundance comes, and the danger subsides, social cohesion is lessened, and individualism increases; communism ends where luxury begins. As the life of a society becomes more complex, and the division of labor differentiates men into diverse occupations and trades, it becomes more and more unlikely that all these services will be equally valuable to the group; inevitably those whose greater ability enables them to perform the more vital functions will take more than their equal share of the rising wealth of the group. Every growing civilization is a scene of multiplying inequalities; the natural differences of human endowment unite with differences of opportunity to produce artificial differences of wealth and power; and where no laws or despots suppress these artificial inequalities they reach at last a bursting point where the poor have nothing to lose by violence, and the chaos of revolution levels men again into a community of destitution.

Hence the dream of communism lurks in every modern society as a racial memory of a

unit of ownership. As the family took on more and more a patriarchal form, with authority centralized in the oldest male, property became increasingly individualized, and personal bequest arose. Frequently an enterprising individual would leave the family haven, adventure beyond the traditional boundaries, and by hard labor reclaim land from the forest, the jungle or the marsh; such land he guarded jealously as his own, and in the end society recognized his right, and another form of individual property began.<sup>40</sup> As the pressure of population increased, and older lands were exhausted, such reclamation went on in a widening circle, until, in the more complex societies, individual ownership became the order of the day. The invention of money coöperated with these factors by facilitating the accumulation, transport and transmission of property. The old tribal rights and traditions reasserted themselves in the technical ownership of the soil by the village community or the king, and in periodical redistributions of the land; but after an epoch of natural oscillation between the old and the new, private property established itself definitely as the basic economic institution of historical society.

Agriculture, while generating civilization, led not only to private property but to slavery. In purely hunting communities slavery had been unknown; the hunter's wives and children sufficed to do the menial work. The men alternated between the excited activity of hunting or war, and the exhausted lassitude of satiety or peace. The characteristic laziness of primitive peoples had its origin, presumably, in this habit of slowly recuperating from the fatigue of battle or the chase; it was not so much laziness as rest. To transform this spasmodic activity into regular work two things were needed: the routine of tillage, and the organization of labor.

Such organization remains loose and spontaneous where men are working for themselves; where they work for others, the organization of labor

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simpler and more equal life; and where inequality or insecurity rises beyond sufferance, men welcome a return to a condition which they idealize by recalling its equality and forgetting its poverty. Periodically the land gets itself redistributed, legally or not, whether by the Gracchi in Rome, the Jacobins in France, or the Communists in Russia; periodically wealth is redistributed, whether by the violent confiscation of property, or by confiscatory taxation of incomes and bequests. Then the race for wealth, goods and power begins again, and the pyramid of ability takes form once more; under whatever laws may be enacted the abler man manages somehow to get the richer soil, the better place, the lion's share; soon he is strong enough to dominate the state and rewrite or interpret the laws; and in time the inequality is as great as before. In this aspect all economic history is the slow heart-beat of the social organism, a vast systole and diastole of naturally concentrating wealth and naturally explosive revolution.

depends in the last analysis upon force. The rise of agriculture and the inequality of men led to the employment of the socially weak by the socially strong; not till then did it occur to the victor in war that the only good prisoner is a live one. Butchery and cannibalism lessened, slavery grew.<sup>4</sup> It was a great moral improvement when men ceased to kill or eat their fellowmen, and merely made them slaves. A similar development on a larger scale may be seen today, when a nation victorious in war no longer exterminates the enemy, but enslaves it with indemnities. Once slavery had been established and had proved profitable, it was extended by condemning to it defaulting debtors and obstinate criminals, and by raids undertaken specifically to capture slaves. War helped to make slavery, and slavery helped to make war.

Probably it was through centuries of slavery that our race acquired its traditions and habits of toil. No one would do any hard or persistent work if he could avoid it without physical, economic or social penalty. Slavery became part of the discipline by which man was prepared for industry. Indirectly it furthered civilization, in so far as it increased wealth and—for a minority—created leisure. After some centuries men took it for granted; Aristotle argued for slavery as natural and inevitable, and St. Paul gave his benediction to what must have seemed, by his time, a divinely ordained institution.

Gradually, through agriculture and slavery, through the division of labor and the inherent diversity of men, the comparative equality of natural society was replaced by inequality and class divisions. "In the primitive group we find as a rule no distinction between slave and free, no serfdom, no caste, and little if any distinction between chief and followers."<sup>4a</sup> Slowly the increasing complexity of tools and trades subjected the unskilled or weak to the skilled or strong; every invention was a new weapon in the hands of the strong, and further strengthened them in their mastery and use of the weak.\* Inheritance added superior opportunity to superior possessions, and stratified once homogeneous societies into a maze of classes and castes. Rich and poor became disruptively conscious of wealth and poverty; the class war began to run as a red thread through all history; and the state arose as an indispensable instrument for the regulation of classes, the protection of property, the waging of war, and the organization of peace.

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\* So in our time that Mississippi of inventions which we call the Industrial Revolution has enormously intensified the natural inequality of men.

### CHAPTER III

## The Political Elements of Civilization

### I. THE ORIGINS OF GOVERNMENT

*The unsocial instinct—Primitive anarchism—The clan and the tribe—The king—War*

MAN is not willingly a political animal. The human male associates with his fellows less by desire than by habit, imitation, and the compulsion of circumstance; he does not love society so much as he fears solitude. He combines with other men because isolation endangers him, and because there are many things that can be done better together than alone; in his heart he is a solitary individual, pitted heroically against the world. If the average man had had his way there would probably never have been any state. Even today he resents it, classes death with taxes, and yearns for that government which governs least. If he asks for many laws it is only because he is sure that his neighbor needs them; privately he is an unphilosophical anarchist, and thinks laws in his own case superfluous.

In the simplest societies there is hardly any government. Primitive hunters tend to accept regulation only when they join the hunting pack and prepare for action. The Bushmen usually live in solitary families; the Pygmies of Africa and the simplest natives of Australia admit only temporarily of political organization, and then scatter away to their family groups; the Tasmanians had no chiefs, no laws, no regular government; the Veddahs of Ceylon formed small circles according to family relationship, but had no government; the Kubus of Sumatra "live without men in authority," every family governing itself; the Fuegians are seldom more than twelve together; the Tungus associate sparingly in groups of ten tents or so; the Australian "horde" is seldom larger than sixty souls.<sup>1</sup> In such cases association and coöperation are for special purposes, like hunting; they do not rise to any permanent political order.

The earliest form of continuous social organization was the clan—a group of related families occupying a common tract of land, having the same

totem, and governed by the same customs or laws. When a group of clans united under the same chief the tribe was formed, and became the second step on the way to the state. But this was a slow development; many groups had no chiefs at all,<sup>2</sup> and many more seem to have tolerated them only in time of war.<sup>3</sup> Instead of democracy being a wilted feather in the cap of our own age, it appears at its best in several primitive groups where such government as exists is merely the rule of the family-heads of the clan, and no arbitrary authority is allowed.<sup>4</sup> The Iroquois and Delaware Indians recognized no laws or restraints beyond the natural order of the family and the clan; their chiefs had modest powers, which might at any time be ended by the elders of the tribe. The Omaha Indians were ruled by a Council of Seven, who deliberated until they came to a unanimous agreement; add this to the famous League of the Iroquois, by which many tribes bound themselves—and honored their pledge—to keep the peace, and one sees no great gap between these “savages” and the modern states that bind themselves revocably to peace in the League of Nations.

It is war that makes the chief, the king and the state, just as it is these that make war. In Samoa the chief had power during war, but at other times no one paid much attention to him. The Dyaks had no other government than that of each family by its head; in case of strife they chose their bravest warrior to lead them, and obeyed him strictly; but once the conflict was ended they literally sent him about his business.<sup>5</sup> In the intervals of peace it was the priest, or head magician, who had most authority and influence; and when at last a permanent kingship developed as the usual mode of government among a majority of tribes, it combined—and derived from—the offices of warrior, father and priest. Societies are ruled by two powers: in peace by the word, in crises by the sword; force is used only when indoctrination fails. Law and myth have gone hand in hand throughout the centuries, coöperating or taking turns in the management of mankind; until our own day no state dared separate them, and perhaps tomorrow they will be united again.

How did war lead to the state? It is not that men were naturally inclined to war. Some lowly peoples are quite peaceful; and the Eskimos could not understand why Europeans of the same pacific faith should hunt one another like seals and steal one another's land. “How well it is”—they apostrophized their soil—“that you are covered with ice and snow! How well it is that if in your rocks there are gold and silver, for which the Christians are so greedy, it is covered with so much snow that they

cannot get at it! Your unfruitfulness makes us happy, and saves us from molestation."<sup>10</sup> Nevertheless, primitive life was incarnadined with intermittent war. Hunters fought for 'happy hunting grounds still rich in prey, herders fought for new pastures for their flocks, tillers fought for virgin soil; all of them, at times, fought to avenge a murder, or to harden and discipline their youth, or to interrupt the monotony of life, or for simple plunder and rape; very rarely for religion. There were institutions and customs for the limitation of slaughter, as among ourselves—certain hours, days, weeks or months during which no gentleman savage would kill; certain functionaries who were inviolable, certain roads neutralized, certain markets and asylums set aside for peace; and the League of the Iroquois maintained the "Great Peace" for three hundred years.' But for the most part war was the favorite instrument of natural selection among primitive nations and groups.

Its results were endless. It acted as a ruthless eliminator of weak peoples, and raised the level of the race in courage, violence, cruelty, intelligence and skill. It stimulated invention, made weapons that became useful tools, and arts of war that became arts of peace. (How many railroads today begin in strategy and end in trade!) Above all, war dissolved primitive communism and anarchism, introduced organization and discipline, and led to the enslavement of prisoners, the subordination of classes, and the growth of government. Property was the mother, war was the father, of the state.

## II. THE STATE

### *As the organization of force—The village community—The psychological aides of the state*

"A herd of blonde beasts of prey," says Nietzsche, "a race of conquerors and masters, which with all its warlike organization and all its organizing power pounces with its terrible claws upon a population, in numbers possibly tremendously superior, but as yet formless, . . . such is the origin of the state."<sup>11</sup> "The state as distinct from tribal organization," says Lester Ward, "begins with the conquest of one race by another."<sup>12</sup> "Everywhere," says Oppenheimer, "we find some warlike tribe breaking through the boundaries of some less warlike people, settling down as nobility, and founding its state."<sup>13</sup> "Violence," says Ratzenhofer, "is the agent which has created the state."<sup>14</sup> The state, says Gumpłowicz, is the result of conquest, the establishment of the victors as a ruling caste

over the vanquished." "The state," says Sumner, "is the product of force, and exists by force."<sup>13</sup>

This violent subjection is usually of a settled agricultural group by a tribe of hunters and herders.<sup>14</sup> For agriculture teaches men pacific ways, inures them to a prosaic routine, and exhausts them with the long day's toil; such men accumulate wealth, but they forget the arts and sentiments of war. The hunter and the herder, accustomed to danger and skilled in killing, look upon war as but another form of the chase, and hardly more perilous; when the woods cease to give them abundant game, or flocks decrease through a thinning pasture, they look with envy upon the ripe fields of the village, they invent with modern ease some plausible reason for attack, they invade, conquer, enslave and rule.\*

The state is a late development, and hardly appears before the time of written history. For it presupposes a change in the very principle of social organization—from kinship to domination; and in primitive societies the former is the rule. Domination succeeds best where it binds diverse natural groups into an advantageous unity of order and trade. Even such conquest is seldom lasting except where the progress of invention has strengthened the strong by putting into their hands new tools and weapons for suppressing revolt. In permanent conquest the principle of domination tends to become concealed and almost unconscious; the French who rebelled in 1789 hardly realized, until Camille Desmoulins reminded them, that the aristocracy that had ruled them for a thousand years had come from Germany and had subjugated them by force. Time sanctifies everything; even the most arrant theft, in the hands of the robber's grandchildren, becomes sacred and inviolable property. Every state begins in compulsion; but the habits of obedience become the content of conscience, and soon every citizen thrills with loyalty to the flag.

The citizen is right; for however the state begins, it soon becomes an indispensable prop to order. As trade unites clans and tribes, relations spring up that depend not on kinship but on contiguity, and therefore require an artificial principle of regulation. The village community may serve as an example: it displaced tribe and clan as the mode of local organization, and

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\* It is a law that holds only for early societies, since under more complex conditions a variety of other factors—greater wealth, better weapons, higher intelligence—contribute to determine the issue. So Egypt was conquered not only by Hyksos, Ethiopian, Arab and Turkish nomads, but also by the settled civilizations of Assyria, Persia, Greece, Rome and England—though not until these nations had become hunters and nomads on an imperialistic scale.

achieved a simple, almost democratic government of small areas through a concourse of family-heads; but the very existence and number of such communities created a need for some external force that could regulate their interrelations and weave them into a larger economic web. The state, ogre though it was in its origin, supplied this need; it became not merely an organized force, but an instrument for adjusting the interests of the thousand conflicting groups that constitute a complex society. It spread the tentacles of its power and law over wider and wider areas, and though it made external war more destructive than before, it extended and maintained internal peace; the state may be defined as internal peace for external war. Men decided that it was better to pay taxes than to fight among themselves; better to pay tribute to one magnificent robber than to bribe them all. What an interregnum meant to a society accustomed to government may be judged from the behavior of the Baganda, among whom, when the king died, every man had to arm himself; for the lawless ran riot, killing and plundering everywhere.<sup>15</sup> "Without autocratic rule," as Spencer said, "the evolution of society could not have commenced."<sup>16</sup>

A state which should rely upon force alone would soon fall, for though men are naturally gullible they are also naturally obstinate, and power, like taxes, succeeds best when it is invisible and indirect. Hence the state, in order to maintain itself, used and forged many instruments of indoctrination—the family, the church, the school—to build in the soul of the citizen a habit of patriotic loyalty and pride. This saved a thousand policemen, and prepared the public mind for that docile coherence which is indispensable in war. Above all, the ruling minority sought more and more to transform its forcible mastery into a body of law which, while consolidating that mastery, would afford a welcome security and order to the people, and would recognize the rights of the "subject"\* sufficiently to win his acceptance of the law and his adherence to the State.

### III. LAW

*Law-lessness—Law and custom—Revenge—Fines—Courts—Ordeal  
—The duel—Punishment—Primitive freedom*

Law comes with property, marriage and government; the lowest societies manage to get along without it. "I have lived with communities of savages in South America and in the East," said Alfred Russel Wallace, "who

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\* Note how this word betrays the origin of the state.



have no law or law-courts but the public opinion of the village freely expressed. Each man scrupulously respects the rights of his fellows, and any infraction of those rights rarely or never takes place. In such a community all are nearly equal."<sup>17</sup> Herman Melville writes similarly of the Marquesas Islanders: "During the time I have lived among the Typees no one was ever put upon his trial for any violence to the public. Everything went on in the valley with a harmony and smoothness unparalleled, I will venture to assert, in the most select, refined, and pious associations of mortals in Christendom."<sup>18</sup> The old Russian Government established courts of law in the Aleutian Islands, but in fifty years those courts found no employment. "Crime and offenses," reports Brinton, "were so infrequent under the social system of the Iroquois that they can scarcely be said to have had a penal code."<sup>19</sup> Such are the ideal—perhaps the idealized—conditions for whose return the anarchist perennially pines.

Certain amendments must be made to these descriptions. Natural societies are comparatively free from law first because they are ruled by customs as rigid and inviolable as any law; and secondly because crimes of violence, in the beginning, are considered to be private matters, and are left to bloody personal revenge.

Underneath all the phenomena of society is the great *terra firma* of custom, that bedrock of time-hallowed modes of thought and action which provides a society with some measure of steadiness and order through all absence, changes, and interruptions of law. Custom gives the same stability to the group that heredity and instinct give to the species, and habit to the individual. It is the routine that keeps men sane; for if there were no grooves along which thought and action might move with unconscious ease, the mind would be perpetually hesitant, and would soon take refuge in lunacy. A law of economy works in instinct and habit, in custom and convention: the most convenient mode of response to repeated stimuli or traditional situations is automatic response. Thought and innovation are disturbances of regularity, and are tolerated only for indispensable readaptations, or promised gold.

When to this natural basis of custom a supernatural sanction is added by religion, and the ways of one's ancestors are also the will of the gods, then custom becomes stronger than law, and subtracts substantially from primitive freedom. To violate law is to win the admiration of half the populace, who secretly envy anyone who can outwit this ancient enemy; to violate custom is to incur almost universal hostility. For custom rises out of the people, whereas law is forced upon them from above; law is usually a de-

cree of the master, but custom is the natural selection of those modes of action that have been found most convenient in the experience of the group. Law partly replaces custom when the state replaces the natural order of the family, the clan, the tribe, and the village community; it more fully replaces custom when writing appears, and laws graduate from a code carried down in the memory of elders and priests into a system of legislation proclaimed in written tables. But the replacement is never complete; in the determination and judgment of human conduct custom remains to the end the force behind the law, the power behind the throne, the last "magistrate of men's lives."

The first stage in the evolution of law is personal revenge. "Vengeance is mine," says the primitive individual; "I will repay." Among the Indian tribes of Lower California every man was his own policeman, and administered justice in the form of such vengeance as he was strong enough to take. So in many early societies the murder of A by B led to the murder of B by A's son or friend C, the murder of C by B's son or friend D, and so on perhaps to the end of the alphabet; we may find examples among the purest-blooded American families of today. This principle of revenge persists throughout the history of law: it appears in the *Lex Talionis*\*—or Law of Retaliation—embodied in Roman Law; it plays a large rôle in the Code of Hammurabi, and in the "Mosaic" demand of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth"; and it lurks behind most legal punishments even in our day.

The second step toward law and civilization in the treatment of crime was the substitution of damages for revenge. Very often the chief, to maintain internal harmony, used his power or influence to have the revengeful family content itself with gold or goods instead of blood. Soon a regular tariff arose, determining how much must be paid for an eye, a tooth, an arm, or a life; Hammurabi legislated extensively in such terms. The Abyssinians were so meticulous in this regard that when a boy fell from a tree upon his companion and killed him, the judges decided that the bereaved mother should send another of her sons into the tree to fall upon the culprit's neck.<sup>2</sup> The penalties assessed in cases of composition might vary with the sex, age and rank of the offender and the injured; among the Fijians, for example, petty larceny by a common man was considered a more heinous crime than murder by a chief.<sup>3</sup> Throughout the

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\* A phrase apparently invented by Cicero.

history of law the magnitude of the crime has been lessened by the magnitude of the criminal.\* Since these fines or compositions, paid to avert revenge, required some adjudication of offenses and damages, a third step towards law was taken by the formation of courts; the chief or the elders or the priests sat in judgment to settle the conflicts of their people. Such courts were not always judgment seats; often they were boards of voluntary conciliation, which arranged some amicable settlement of the dispute.† For many centuries, and among many peoples, resort to courts remained optional; and where the offended party was dissatisfied with the judgment rendered, he was still free to seek personal revenge.<sup>22</sup>

In many cases disputes were settled by a public contest between the parties, varying in bloodiness from a harmless boxing-match—as among the wise Eskimos—to a duel to the death. Frequently the primitive mind resorted to an ordeal not so much on the medieval theory that a deity would reveal the culprit as in the hope that the ordeal, however unjust, would end a feud that might otherwise embroil the tribe for generations. Sometimes accuser and accused were asked to choose between two bowls of food of which one was poisoned; the wrong party might be poisoned (usually not beyond redemption), but then the dispute was ended, since both parties ordinarily believed in the righteousness of the ordeal. Among some tribes it was the custom for a native who acknowledged his guilt to hold out his leg and permit the injured party to pierce it with a spear. Or the accused submitted to having spears thrown at him by his accusers; if they all missed him he was declared innocent; if he was hit, even by one, he was adjudged guilty, and the affair was closed.<sup>23</sup> From such early forms the ordeal persisted through the laws of Moses and Hammurabi and down into the Middle Ages; the duel, which is one form of the ordeal, and which historians thought dead, is being revived in our own day. So brief and narrow, in some respects, is the span between primitive and modern man; so short is the history of civilization.

The fourth advance in the growth of law was the assumption, by the chief or the state, of the obligation to prevent and punish wrongs. It is but a step from settling disputes and punishing offenses to making some

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\* Perhaps an exception should be made in the case of the Brahmans, who, by the Code of Manu (VIII, 336-8), were called upon to bear greater punishments for the same crime than members of lower castes; but this regulation was well honored in the breach.

† Some of our most modern cities are trying to revive this ancient time-saving institution.

effort to prevent them. So the chief becomes not merely a judge but a lawgiver; and to the general body of "common law" derived from the customs of the group is added a body of "positive law," derived from the decrees of the government; in the one case the laws grow up, in the other they are handed down. In either case the laws carry with them the mark of their ancestry, and reek with the vengeance which they tried to replace. Primitive punishments are cruel,\* because primitive society feels insecure; as social organization becomes more stable, punishments become less severe.

In general the individual has fewer "rights" in natural society than under civilization. Everywhere man is born in chains: the chains of heredity, of environment, of custom, and of law. The primitive individual moves always within a web of regulations incredibly stringent and detailed; a thousand tabus restrict his action, a thousand terrors limit his will. The natives of New Zealand were apparently without laws, but in actual fact rigid custom ruled every aspect of their lives. Unchangeable and unquestionable conventions determined the sitting and the rising, the standing and the walking, the eating, drinking and sleeping of the natives of Bengal. The individual was hardly recognized as a separate entity in natural society; what existed was the family and the clan, the tribe and the village community; it was these that owned land and exercised power. Only with the coming of private property, which gave him economic authority, and of the state, which gave him a legal status and defined rights, did the individual begin to stand out as a distinct reality.\* Rights do not come to us from nature, which knows no rights except cunning and strength; they are privileges assured to individuals by the community as advantageous to the common good. Liberty is a luxury of security; the free individual is a product and a mark of civilization.

#### IV. THE FAMILY

*Its function in civilization—The clan vs. the family—Growth of parental care—Unimportance of the father—Separation of the sexes—Mother-right—Status of woman—Her occupations—Her economic achievements—The patriarchate—The subjection of woman*

As the basic needs of man are hunger and love, so the fundamental functions of social organization are economic provision and biological maintenance; a stream of children is as vital as a continuity of food. To insti-

tutions which seek material welfare and political order, society always adds institutions for the perpetuation of the race. Until the state—towards the dawn of the historic civilizations—becomes the central and permanent source of social order, the clan undertakes the delicate task of regulating the relations between the sexes and between the generations; and even after the state has been established, the essential government of mankind remains in that most deep-rooted of all historic institutions, the family.

It is highly improbable that the first human beings lived in isolated families, even in the hunting stage; for the inferiority of man in physiological organs of defense would have left such families a prey to marauding beasts. Usually, in nature, those organisms that are poorly equipped for individual defense live in groups, and find in united action a means of survival in a world bristling with tusks and claws and impenetrable hides. Presumably it was so with man; he saved himself by solidarity in the hunting-pack and the clan. When economic relations and political mastery replaced kinship as the principle of social organization, the clan lost its position as the sub-structure of society; at the bottom it was supplanted by the family, at the top it was superseded by the state. Government took over the problem of maintaining order, while the family assumed the tasks of reorganizing industry and carrying on the race.

Among the lower animals there is no care of progeny; consequently eggs are spawned in great number, and some survive and develop while the great majority are eaten or destroyed. Most fish lay a million eggs per year; a few species of fish show a modest solicitude for their offspring, and find half a hundred eggs per year sufficient for their purposes. Birds care better for their young, and hatch from five to twelve eggs yearly; mammals, whose very name suggests parental care, master the earth with an average of three young per female per year.<sup>80</sup> Throughout the animal world fertility and destruction decrease as parental care increases; throughout the human world the birth rate and the death rate fall together as civilization rises. Better family care makes possible a longer adolescence, in which the young receive fuller training and development before they are flung upon their own resources; and the lowered birth rate releases human energy for other activities than reproduction.

Since it was the mother who fulfilled most of the parental functions, the family was at first (so far as we can pierce the mists of history) organized on the assumption that the position of the man in the family was

superficial and incidental, while that of the woman was fundamental and supreme. In some existing tribes, and probably in the earliest human groups the physiological rôle of the male in reproduction appears to have escaped notice quite as completely as among animals, who rut and mate and breed with happy unconsciousness of cause and effect. The Trobriand Islanders attribute pregnancy not to any commerce of the sexes, but to the entrance of a *baloma*, or ghost, into the woman. Usually the ghost enters while the woman is bathing; "a fish has bitten me," the girl reports. "When," says Malinowski, "I asked who was the father of an illegitimate child, there was only one answer—that there was no father, since the girl was unmarried. If, then, I asked, in quite plain terms, who was the physiological father, the question was not understood. . . . The answer would be: 'It is a *baloma* who gave her this child.' " These islanders had a strange belief that the *baloma* would more readily enter a girl given to loose relations with men; nevertheless, in choosing precautions against pregnancy, the girls preferred to avoid bathing at high tide rather than to forego relations with men.<sup>27</sup> It is a delightful story, which must have proved a great convenience in the embarrassing aftermath of generosity; it would be still more delightful if it had been invented for anthropologists as well as for husbands.

In Melanesia intercourse was recognized as the cause of pregnancy, but unmarried girls insisted on blaming some article in their diet.<sup>28</sup> Even where the function of the male was understood, sex relationships were so irregular that it was never a simple matter to determine the father. Consequently the quite primitive mother seldom bothered to inquire into the paternity of her child; it belonged to her, and she belonged not to a husband but to her father—or her brother—and the clan; it was with these that she remained, and these were the only male relatives whom her child would know.<sup>29</sup> The bonds of affection between brother and sister were usually stronger than between husband and wife. The husband, in many cases, remained in the family and clan of his mother, and saw his wife only as a clandestine visitor. Even in classical civilization the brother was dearer than the husband: it was her brother, not her husband, that the wife of Intaphernes saved from the wrath of Darius; it was for her brother, not for her husband, that Antigone sacrificed herself.<sup>30</sup> "The notion that a man's wife is the nearest person in the world to him is a relatively modern notion, and one which is restricted to a comparatively small part of the human race."<sup>31</sup>

So slight is the relation between father and children in primitive society that in a great number of tribes the sexes live apart. In Australia and British New Guinea, in Africa and Micronesia, in Assam and Burma, among the Alcuts, Eskimos and Samoyeds, and here and there over the earth, tribes may still be found in which there is no visible family life; the men live apart from the women, and visit them only now and then; even the meals are taken separately. In northern Papua it is not considered right for a man to be seen associating socially with a woman, even if she is the mother of his children. In Tahiti "family life is quite unknown." Out of this segregation of the sexes come those secret fraternities—usually of males—which appear everywhere among primitive races, and serve most often as a refuge against women.<sup>33</sup> They resemble our modern fraternities in another point—their hierarchical organization.

The simplest form of the family, then, was the woman and her children, living with her mother or her brother in the clan; such an arrangement was a natural outgrowth of the animal family of the mother and her litter, and of the biological ignorance of primitive man. An alternative early form was "matrilocal marriage": the husband left his clan and went to live with the clan and family of his wife, laboring for her or with her in the service of her parents. Descent, in such cases, was traced through the female line, and inheritance was through the mother; sometimes even the kingship passed down through her rather than through the male.<sup>34</sup> This "mother-right" was not a "matriarchate"—it did not imply the rule of women over men.<sup>35</sup> Even when property was transmitted through the woman she had little power over it; she was used as a means of tracing relationships which, through primitive laxity or freedom, were otherwise obscure.<sup>36</sup> It is true that in any system of society the woman exercises a certain authority, rising naturally out of her importance in the home, out of her function as the dispenser of food, and out of the need that the male has of her, and her power to refuse him. It is also true that there have been, occasionally, women rulers among some South African tribes; that in the Pelew Islands the chief did nothing of consequence without the advice of a council of elder women; that among the Iroquois the squaws had an equal right, with the men, of speaking and voting in the tribal council;<sup>37</sup> and that among the Seneca Indians women held great power, even to the selection of the chief. But these are rare and exceptional cases. All in all the position of woman in early societies was one of subjection verging upon slavery. Her periodic disability, her unfamiliarity

with weapons, the biological absorption of her strength in carrying, nursing and rearing children, handicapped her in the war of the sexes, and doomed her to a subordinate status in all but the very lowest and the very highest societies. Nor was her position necessarily to rise with the development of civilization; it was destined to be lower in Periclean Greece than among the North American Indians; it was to rise and fall with her strategic importance rather than with the culture and morals of men.

In the hunting stage she did almost all the work except the actual capture of the game. In return for exposing himself to the hardships and risks of the chase, the male rested magnificently for the greater part of the year. The woman bore her children abundantly, reared them, kept the hut or home in repair, gathered food in woods and fields, cooked, cleaned, and made the clothing and the boots." Because the men, when the tribe moved, had to be ready at any moment to fight off attack, they carried nothing but their weapons; the women carried all the rest. Bush-women were used as servants and beasts of burden; if they proved too weak to keep up with the march, they were abandoned.<sup>88</sup> When the natives of the Lower Murray saw pack oxen they thought that these were the wives of the whites.<sup>89</sup> The differences in strength which now divide the sexes hardly existed in those days, and are now environmental rather than innate: woman, apart from her biological disabilities, was almost the equal of man in stature, endurance, resourcefulness and courage; she was not yet an ornament, a thing of beauty, or a sexual toy; she was a robust animal, able to perform arduous work for long hours, and, if necessary, to fight to the death for her children or her clan. "Women," said a chieftain of the Chippewas, "are created for work. One of them can draw or carry as much as two men. They also pitch our tents, make our clothes, mend them, and keep us warm at night. . . . We absolutely cannot get along without them on a journey. They do everything and cost only a little; for since they must be forever cooking, they can be satisfied in lean times by licking their fingers."<sup>90</sup>

Most economic advances, in early society, were made by the woman rather than the man. While for centuries he clung to his ancient ways of hunting and herding, she developed agriculture near the camp, and those busy arts of the home which were to become the most important industries of later days. From the "wool-bearing tree," as the Greeks called the cotton plant, the primitive woman rolled thread and made cotton cloth.<sup>4</sup> It was she, apparently, who developed sewing, weaving, basketry, pottery,



woodworking, and building; and in many cases it was she who carried on primitive trade.<sup>19</sup> It was she who developed the home, slowly adding man to the list of her domesticated animals, and training him in those social dispositions and amenities which are the psychological basis and cement of civilization.

But when industry became more complex and brought greater rewards, the stronger sex took more and more of it into its own hands.<sup>20</sup> The growth of cattle-breeding gave the man a new source of wealth, stability and power; even agriculture, which must have seemed so prosaic to the mighty Nimrods of antiquity, was at last accepted by the wandering male, and the economic leadership which tillage had for a time given to women was wrested from them by the men. The application to agriculture of those very animals that woman had first domesticated led to her replacement by the male in the control of the fields; the advance from the hoe to the plough put a premium upon physical strength, and enabled the man to assert his supremacy. The growth of transmissible property in cattle and in the products of the soil led to the sexual subordination of woman, for the male now demanded from her that fidelity which he thought would enable him to pass on his accumulations to children presumably his own. Gradually the man had his way: fatherhood became recognized, and property began to descend through the male; mother-right yielded to father-right; and the patriarchal family, with the oldest male at its head, became the economic, legal, political and moral unit of society. The gods, who had been mostly feminine, became great bearded patriarchs, with such harems as ambitious men dreamed of in their solitude.

This passage to the patriarchal—father-ruled—family was fatal to the position of woman. In all essential aspects she and her children became the property first of her father or oldest brother, then of her husband. She was bought in marriage precisely as a slave was bought in the market. She was bequeathed as property when her husband died; and in some places (New Guinea, the New Hebrides, the Solomon Islands, Fiji, India, etc.) she was strangled and buried with her dead husband, or was expected to commit suicide, in order to attend upon him in the other world.<sup>21</sup> The father had now the right to treat, give, sell or lend his wives and daughters very much as he pleased, subject only to the social condemnation of other fathers exercising the same rights. While the male reserved the privilege of extending his sexual favors beyond his home, the woman—under patri-

archal institutions—was vowed to complete chastity before marriage, and complete fidelity after it. The double standard was born.

The general subjection of woman which had existed in the hunting stage, and had persisted, in diminished form, through the period of mother-right, became now more pronounced and merciless than before. In ancient Russia, on the marriage of a daughter, the father struck her gently with a whip, and then presented the whip to the bridegroom,<sup>48</sup> as a sign that her beatings were now to come from a rejuvenated hand. Even the American Indians, among whom mother-right survived indefinitely, treated their women harshly, consigned to them all drudgery, and often called them dogs.<sup>49</sup> Everywhere the life of a woman was considered cheaper than that of a man; and when girls were born there was none of the rejoicing that marked the coming of a male. Mothers sometimes destroyed their female children to keep them from misery. In Fiji wives might be sold at pleasure, and the usual price was a musket.<sup>50</sup> Among some tribes man and wife did not sleep together, lest the breath of the woman should enfeeble the man; in Fiji it was not thought proper for a man to sleep regularly at home; in New Caledonia the wife slept in a shed, while the man slept in the house. In Fiji dogs were allowed in some of the temples, but women were excluded from all;<sup>51</sup> such exclusion of women from religious services survives in Islam to this day. Doubtless woman enjoyed at all times the mastery that comes of long-continued speech; the men might be rebuffed, harangued, even—now and then—beaten.<sup>52</sup> But all in all the man was lord, the woman was servant. The Kaffir bought women like slaves, as a form of life-income insurance; when he had a sufficient number of wives he could rest for the remainder of his days; they would do all the work for him. Some tribes of ancient India reckoned the women of a family as part of the property inheritance, along with the domestic animals;<sup>53</sup> nor did the last commandment of Moses distinguish very clearly in this matter. Throughout negro Africa women hardly differed from slaves, except that they were expected to provide sexual as well as economic satisfaction. Marriage began as a form of the law of property, as a part of the institution of slavery.<sup>54</sup>

## The Moral Elements of Civilization

SINCE no society can exist without order, and no order without regulation, we may take it as a rule of history that the power of custom varies inversely as the multiplicity of laws, much as the power of instinct varies inversely as the multiplicity of thoughts. Some rules are necessary for the game of life; they may differ in different groups, but within the group they must be essentially the same. These rules may be conventions, customs, morals, or laws. Conventions are forms of behavior found expedient by a people; customs are conventions accepted by successive generations, after natural selection through trial and error and elimination; morals are such customs as the group considers vital to its welfare and development. In primitive societies, where there is no written law, these vital customs or morals regulate every sphere of human existence, and give stability and continuity to the social order. Through the slow magic of time such customs, by long repetition, become a second nature in the individual; if he violates them he feels a certain fear, discomfort or shame; this is the origin of that conscience, or moral sense, which Darwin chose as the most impressive distinction between animals and men.<sup>1</sup> In its higher development conscience is social consciousness—the feeling of the individual that he belongs to a group, and owes it some measure of loyalty and consideration. Morality is the coöperation of the part with the whole, and of each group with some larger whole. Civilization, of course, would be impossible without it.

### I. MARRIAGE

*The meaning of marriage—Its biological origins—Sexual communism—Trial marriage—Group marriage—Individual marriage—Polygamy—Its eugenic value—Exogamy—Marriage by service—By capture—By purchase—Primitive love—The economic function of marriage*

The first task of those customs that constitute the moral code of a group is to regulate the relations of the sexes, for these are a perennial source of discord, violence, and possible degeneration. The basic form of this

sexual regulation is marriage, which may be defined as the association of mates for the care of offspring. It is a variable and fluctuating institution, which has passed through almost every conceivable form and experiment in the course of its history, from the primitive care of offspring without the association of mates to the modern association of mates without the care of offspring.

Our animal forefathers invented it. Some birds seem to live as reproducing mates in a divorceless monogamy. Among gorillas and orangutans the association of the parents continues to the end of the breeding season, and has many human features. Any approach to loose behavior on the part of the female is severely punished by the male.<sup>7</sup> The orangs of Borneo, says De Crespigny, "live in families: the male, the female, and a young one"; and Dr. Savage reports of the gorillas that "it is not unusual to see the 'old folks' sitting under a tree regaling themselves with fruit and friendly chat, while their children are leaping around them and swinging from branch to branch in boisterous merriment."<sup>8</sup> Marriage is older than man.

Societies without marriage are rare, but the sedulous inquirer can find enough of them to form a respectable transition from the promiscuity of the lower mammals to the marriages of primitive men. In Futuna and Hawaii the majority of the people did not marry at all;<sup>9</sup> the Lubus mated freely and indiscriminately, and had no conception of marriage; certain tribes of Borneo lived in marriageless association, freer than the birds; and among some peoples of primitive Russia "the men utilized the women without distinction, so that no woman had her appointed husband."<sup>10</sup> African pygmies have been described as having no marriage institutions, but as following "their animal instincts wholly without restraint."<sup>11</sup> This primitive "nationalization of women," corresponding to primitive communism in land and food, passed away at so early a stage that few traces of it remain. Some memory of it, however, lingered on in divers forms: in the feeling of many nature peoples that monogamy—which they would define as the monopoly of a woman by one man—is unnatural and immoral;<sup>12</sup> in periodic festivals of license (still surviving faintly in our *Mardi Gras*), when sexual restraints were temporarily abandoned; in the demand that a woman should give herself—as at the Temple of Mylitta in Babylon—to any man that solicited her, before she would be allowed to marry;<sup>13</sup> in

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\* Cf. below, p. 245.

the custom of wife-lending, so essential to many primitive codes of hospitality; and in the *jus primæ noctis*, or right of the first night, by which, in early feudal Europe, the lord of the manor, perhaps representing the ancient rights of the tribe, occasionally deflowered the bride before the bridegroom was allowed to consummate the marriage.<sup>9</sup>

A variety of tentative unions gradually took the place of indiscriminate relations. Among the Orang Sakai of Malacca a girl remained for a time with each man of the tribe, passing from one to another until she had made the rounds; then she began again.<sup>7</sup> Among the Yakuts of Siberia, the Botocudos of South Africa, the lower classes of Tibet, and many other peoples, marriage was quite experimental, and could be ended at the will of either party, with no reasons given or required. Among the Bushmen "any disagreement sufficed to end a union, and new connections could immediately be found for both." Among the Damaras, according to Sir Francis Galton, "the spouse was changed almost weekly, and I seldom knew without inquiry who the *pro tempore* husband of each lady was at any particular time." Among the Baila "women are bandied about from man to man, and of their own accord leave one husband for another. Young women scarcely out of their teens often have had four or five husbands, all still living."<sup>8</sup> The original word for marriage, in Hawaii, meant to try.<sup>9</sup> Among the Tahitians, a century ago, unions were free and dissoluble at will, so long as there were no children; if a child came the parents might destroy it without social reproach, or the couple might rear the child and enter into a more permanent relation; the man pledged his support to the woman in return for the burden of parental care that she now assumed.<sup>10</sup>

Marco Polo writes of a Central Asiatic tribe, inhabiting Peyn (now Keriya) in the thirteenth century: "If a married man goes to a distance from home to be absent twenty days, his wife has a right, if she is so inclined, to take another husband; and the men, on the same principle, marry wherever they happen to reside."<sup>11</sup> So old are the latest innovations in marriage and morals.

Letourneau said of marriage that "every possible experiment compatible with the duration of savage or barbarian societies has been tried, or is still practised, amongst various races, without the least thought of the moral ideas generally prevailing in Europe."<sup>12</sup> In addition to experiments in permanence there were experiments in relationship. In a few cases we find "group

marriage," by which a number of men belonging to one group married collectively a number of women belonging to another group.<sup>13</sup> In Tibet, for example, it was the custom for a group of brothers to marry a group of sisters, and for the two groups to practise sexual communism between them, each of the men cohabiting with each of the women.<sup>14</sup> Caesar reported a similar custom in ancient Britain.<sup>15</sup> Survivals of it appear in the "levirate," a custom existing among the early Jews and other ancient peoples, by which a man was obligated to marry his brother's widow;<sup>16</sup> this was the rule that so irked Onan.

What was it that led men to replace the semi-promiscuity of primitive society with individual marriage? Since, in a great majority of nature peoples, there are few, if any, restraints on premarital relations, it is obvious that physical desire does not give rise to the institution of marriage. For marriage, with its restrictions and psychological irritations, could not possibly compete with sexual communism as a mode of satisfying the erotic propensities of men. Nor could the individual establishment offer at the outset any mode of rearing children that would be obviously superior to their rearing by the mother, her family, and the clan. Some powerful economic motives must have favored the evolution of marriage. In all probability (for again we must remind ourselves how little we really know of origins) these motives were connected with the rising institution of property.

Individual marriage came through the desire of the male to have cheap slaves, and to avoid bequeathing his property to other men's children. Polygamy, or the marriage of one person to several mates, appears here and there in the form of polyandry—the marriage of one woman to several men—as among the Todas and some tribes of Tibet;<sup>17</sup> the custom may still be found where males outnumber females considerably.<sup>18</sup> But this custom soon falls prey to the conquering male, and polygamy has come to mean for us, usually, what would more strictly be called polygyny—the possession of several wives by one man. Medieval theologians thought that Mohammed had invented polygamy, but it antedated Islam by some years, being the prevailing mode of marriage in the primitive world.<sup>19</sup> Many causes conspired to make it general. In early society, because of hunting and war, the life of the male is more violent and dangerous, and the death rate of men is higher, than that of women. The consequent excess of women compels a choice between polygamy and the barren

celibacy of a minority of women; but such celibacy is intolerable to peoples who require a high birth rate to make up for a high death rate, and who therefore scorn the mateless and childless woman. Again, men like variety; as the Negroes of Angola expressed it, they were "not able to eat always of the same dish." Also, men like youth in their mates, and women age rapidly in primitive communities. The women themselves often favored polygamy; it permitted them to nurse their children longer, and therefore to reduce the frequency of motherhood without interfering with the erotic and philoprogenitive inclinations of the male. Sometimes the first wife, burdened with toil, helped her husband to secure an additional wife, so that her burden might be shared, and additional children might raise the productive power and the wealth of the family.<sup>20</sup> Children were economic assets, and men invested in wives in order to draw children from them like interest. In the patriarchal system wives and children were in effect the slaves of the man; the more a man had of them, the richer he was. The poor man practised monogamy, but he looked upon it as a shameful condition, from which some day he would rise to the respected position of a polygamous male.<sup>21</sup>

Doubtless polygamy was well adapted to the marital needs of a primitive society in which women outnumbered men. It had a eugenic value superior to that of contemporary monogamy; for whereas in modern society the most able and prudent men marry latest and have least children, under polygamy the most able men, presumably, secured the best mates and had most children. Hence polygamy has survived among practically all nature peoples, even among the majority of civilized mankind; only in our day has it begun to die in the Orient. Certain conditions, however, militated against it. The decrease in danger and violence, consequent upon a settled agricultural life, brought the sexes towards an approximate numerical equality; and under these circumstances open polygamy, even in primitive societies, became the privilege of the prosperous minority.<sup>22</sup> The mass of the people practised a monogamy tempered with adultery, while another minority, of willing or regretful celibates, balanced the polygamy of the rich. Jealousy in the male, and possessiveness in the female, entered into the situation more effectively as the sexes approximated in number; for where the strong could not have a multiplicity of wives except by taking the actual or potential wives of other men, and by (in some cases) offending their own, polygamy became a difficult

matter, which only the cleverest could manage. As property accumulated, and men were loath to scatter it in small bequests, it became desirable to differentiate wives into "chief wife" and concubines, so that only the children of the former should share the legacy; this remained the status of marriage in Asia until our own generation. Gradually the chief wife became the only wife, the concubines became kept women in secret and apart, or they disappeared; and as Christianity entered upon the scene, monogamy, in Europe, took the place of polygamy as the lawful and outward form of sexual association. But monogamy, like letters and the state, is artificial, and belongs to the history, not to the origins, of civilization.

Whatever form the union might take, marriage was obligatory among nearly all primitive peoples. The unmarried male had no standing in the community, or was considered only half a man.<sup>33</sup> Exogamy, too, was compulsory: *that is to say, a man was expected to secure his wife from another clan than his own.* Whether this custom arose because the primitive mind suspected the evil effects of close inbreeding, or because such intergroup marriages created or cemented useful political alliances, promoted social organization, and lessened the danger of war, or because the capture of a wife from another tribe had become a fashionable mark of male maturity, or because familiarity breeds contempt and distance lends enchantment to the view—we do not know. In any case the restriction was well-nigh universal in early society; and though it was successfully violated by the Pharaohs, the Ptolemies and the Incas, who all favored the marriage of brother and sister, it survived into Roman and modern law and consciously or unconsciously moulds our behavior to this day.

How did the male secure his wife from another tribe? Where the matriarchal organization was strong he was often required to go and live with the clan of the girl whom he sought. As the patriarchal system developed, the suitor was allowed, after a term of service to the father, to take his bride back to his own clan; so Jacob served Laban for Leah and Rachel.<sup>34</sup> Sometimes the suitor shortened the matter with plain, blunt force. It was an advantage as well as a distinction to have stolen a wife; not only would she be a cheap slave, but new slaves could be begotten of her, and these children would chain her to her slavery. Such marriage by capture, though not the rule, occurred sporadically in the primitive world. Among the North American Indians the women were included in the spoils of war, and this happened so frequently that in some tribes the husbands and their



wives spoke mutually unintelligible languages. The Slavs of Russia and Serbia practised occasional marriage by capture until the last century.<sup>145</sup> Vestiges of it remain in the custom of simulating the capture of the bride by the groom in certain wedding ceremonies.<sup>17</sup> All in all it was a logical aspect of the almost incessant war of the tribes, and a logical starting-point for that eternal war of the sexes whose only truces are brief nocturnes and dreamless sleep.

As wealth grew it became more convenient to offer the father a substantial present—or a sum of money—for his daughter, rather than serve for her in an alien clan, or risk the violence and feuds that might come of marriage by capture. Consequently marriage by purchase and parental arrangement was the rule in early societies.<sup>18</sup> Transition forms occur; the Melanesians sometimes stole their wives, but made the theft legal by a later payment to her family. Among some natives of New Guinea the man abducted the girl, and then, while he and she were in hiding, commissioned his friends to bargain with her father over a purchase price.<sup>19</sup> The ease with which moral indignation in these matters might be financially appeased is illuminating. A Maori mother, wailing loudly, bitterly cursed the youth who had eloped with her daughter, until he presented her with a blanket. "That was all I wanted," she said; "I only wanted to get a blanket, and therefore made this noise."<sup>20</sup> Usually the bride cost more than a blanket: among the Hottentots her price was an ox or a cow; among the Croo three cows and a sheep; among the Kaffirs six to thirty head of cattle, depending upon the rank of the girl's family; and among the Togos sixteen dollars cash and six dollars in goods.<sup>21</sup>

Marriage by purchase prevails throughout primitive Africa, and is still a normal institution in China and Japan; it flourished in ancient India and Judea, and in pre-Columbian Central America and Peru; instances of it occur in Europe today.<sup>22</sup> It is a natural development of patriarchal institutions; the father owns the daughter, and may dispose of her, within broad limits, as he sees fit. The Orinoco Indians expressed the matter by saying that the suitor should pay the father for rearing the girl for his use.<sup>23</sup> Sometimes the girl was exhibited to potential suitors in a bride-show; so among the Somalis the bride, richly caparisoned, was led about on horseback or on

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\* Briffault thinks that marriage by capture was a transition from matrilineal to patriarchal marriage: the male, refusing to go and live with the tribe or family of his wife, forced her to come to his.<sup>24</sup> Lippert believed that exogamy arose as a peaceable substitute for capture;<sup>25</sup> theft again graduated into trade.

foot, in an atmosphere heavily perfumed to stir the suitors to a handsome price.<sup>81</sup> There is no record of women objecting to marriage by purchase; on the contrary, they took keen pride in the sums paid for them, and scorned the woman who gave herself in marriage without a price;<sup>82</sup> they believed that in a "love-match" the villainous male was getting too much for nothing.<sup>83</sup> On the other hand, it was usual for the father to acknowledge the bridegroom's payment with a return gift which, as time went on, approximated more and more in value to the sum offered for the bride.<sup>84</sup> Rich fathers, anxious to smooth the way for their daughters, gradually enlarged these gifts until the institution of the dowry took form; and the purchase of the husband by the father replaced, or accompanied, the purchase of the wife by the suitor.<sup>85</sup>

In all these forms and varieties of marriage there is hardly a trace of romantic love. We find a few cases of love-marriages among the Papuans of New Guinea; among other primitive peoples we come upon instances of love (in the sense of mutual devotion rather than mutual need), but usually these attachments have nothing to do with marriage. In simple days men married for cheap labor, profitable parentage, and regular meals. "In Yariba," says Lander, "marriage is celebrated by the natives as unconcernedly as possible; a man thinks as little of taking a wife as of cutting an ear of corn—affection is altogether out of the question."<sup>86</sup> Since premarital relations are abundant in primitive society, passion is not dammed up by denial, and seldom affects the choice of a wife. For the same reason—the absence of delay between desire and fulfilment—no time is given for that brooding introversion of frustrated, and therefore idealizing, passion which is usually the source of youthful romantic love. Such love is reserved for developed civilizations, in which morals have raised barriers against desire, and the growth of wealth has enabled some men to afford, and some women to provide, the luxuries and delicacies of romance; primitive peoples are too poor to be romantic. One rarely finds love poetry in their songs. When the missionaries translated the Bible into the language of the Algonquins they could discover no native equivalent for the word *love*. The Hottentots are described as "cold and indifferent to one another" in marriage. On the Gold Coast "not even the appearance of affection exists between husband and wife"; and it is the same in primitive Australia. "I asked Baba," said Caillié, speaking of a Senegal Negro, "why he did not sometimes make merry with his wives. He replied that if he did he should not be able to manage them." An Australian native, asked why he wished to

marry, answered honestly that he wanted a wife to secure food, water and wood for him, and to carry his belongings on the march.<sup>10</sup> The kiss, which seems so indispensable to America, is quite unknown to primitive peoples, or known only to be scorned.<sup>11</sup>

In general the "savage" takes his sex philosophically, with hardly more of metaphysical or theological misgiving than the animal; he does not brood over it, or fly into a passion with it; it is as much a matter of course with him as his food. He makes no pretense to idealistic motives. Marriage is never a sacrament with him, and seldom an affair of lavish ceremony; it is frankly a commercial transaction. It never occurs to him to be ashamed that he subordinates emotional to practical considerations in choosing his mate; he would rather be ashamed of the opposite, and would demand of us, if he were as immodest as we are, some explanation of our custom of binding a man and a woman together almost for life because sexual desire has chained them for a moment with its lightning. The primitive male looked upon marriage in terms not of sexual license but of economic co-operation. He expected the woman—and the woman expected herself—to be not so much gracious and beautiful (though he appreciated these qualities in her) as useful and industrious; she was to be an economic asset rather than a total loss; otherwise the matter-of-fact "savage" would never have thought of marriage at all. Marriage was a profitable partnership, not a private debauch; it was a way whereby a man and a woman, working together, might be more prosperous than if each worked alone. Wherever, in the history of civilization, woman has ceased to be an economic asset in marriage, marriage has decayed; and sometimes civilization has decayed with it.

## II. SEXUAL MORALITY

*Premarital relations — Prostitution — Chastity — Virginity — The double standard—Modesty—The relativity of morals—The biological rôle of modesty—Adultery—Divorce—Abortion—Infanticide—Childhood—The individual*

The greatest task of morals is always sexual regulation; for the reproductive instinct creates problems not only within marriage, but before and after it, and threatens at any moment to disturb social order with its persistence, its intensity, its scorn of law, and its perversions. The first problem concerns premarital relations—shall they be restricted, or free? Even among animals sex is not quite unrestrained; the rejection of the male by

the female except in periods of rut reduces sex to a much more modest rôle in the animal world than it occupies in our own lecherous species. As Beaumarchais put it, man differs from the animal in eating without being hungry, drinking without being thirsty, and making love at all seasons. Among primitive peoples we find some analogue, or converse, of animal restrictions, in the tabu placed upon relations with a woman in her menstrual period. With this general exception premarital intercourse is left for the most part free in the simplest societies. Among the North American Indians the young men and women mated freely; and these relations were not held an impediment to marriage. Among the Papuans of New Guinea sex life began at an extremely early age, and premarital promiscuity was the rule.<sup>48</sup> Similar premarital liberty obtained among the Soyots of Siberia, the Igorots of the Philippines, the natives of Upper Burma, the Kaffirs and Bushmen of Africa, the tribes of the Niger and the Uganda, of New Georgia, the Murray Islands, the Andaman Islands, Tahiti, Polynesia, Assam, etc.<sup>49</sup>

Under such conditions we must not expect to find much prostitution in primitive society. The "oldest profession" is comparatively young; it arises only with civilization, with the appearance of property and the disappearance of premarital freedom. Here and there we find girls selling themselves for a while to raise a dowry, or to provide funds for the temples; but this occurs only where the local moral code approves of it as a pious sacrifice to help thrifty parents or hungry gods.<sup>50</sup>

Chastity is a correspondingly late development. What the primitive maiden dreaded was not the loss of virginity, but a reputation for sterility;<sup>51</sup> premarital pregnancy was, more often than not, an aid rather than a handicap in finding a husband, for it settled all doubts of sterility, and promised profitable children. The simpler tribes, before the coming of property, seem to have held virginity in contempt, as indicating unpopularity. The Kamchadal bridegroom who found his bride to be a virgin was much put out, and "roundly abused her mother for the negligent way in which she had brought up her daughter."<sup>52</sup> In many places virginity was considered a barrier to marriage, because it laid upon the husband the unpleasant task of violating the tabu that forbade him to shed the blood of any member of his tribe. Sometimes girls offered themselves to a stranger in order to break this tabu against their marriage. In Tibet mothers anxiously sought men who would deflower their daughters; in Malabar the girls themselves begged the services of passers-by to the same end, "for while they were

virgins they could not find a husband." In some tribes the bride was obliged to give herself to the wedding guests before going in to her husband; in others the bridegroom hired a man to end the virginity of his bride; among certain Philippine tribes a special official was appointed, at a high salary, to perform this function for prospective husbands.<sup>49</sup>

What was it that changed virginity from a fault into a virtue, and made it an element in the moral codes of all the higher civilizations? Doubtless it was the institution of property. Premarital chastity came as an extension, to the daughters, of the proprietary feeling with which the patriarchal male looked upon his wife. The valuation of virginity rose when, under marriage by purchase, the virgin bride was found to bring a higher price than her weak sister; the virgin gave promise, by her past, of that marital fidelity which now seemed so precious to men beset by worry lest they should leave their property to surreptitious children.<sup>50</sup>

The men never thought of applying the same restrictions to themselves; no society in history has ever insisted on the premarital chastity of the male; no language has ever had a word for a virgin man.<sup>51</sup> The aura of virginity was kept exclusively for daughters, and pressed upon them in a thousands ways. The Tuaregs punished the irregularity of a daughter or a sister with death; the Negroes of Nubia, Abyssinia, Somaliland, etc., practised upon their daughters the cruel art of infibulation—i.e., the attachment of a ring or lock to the genitals to prevent copulation; in Burma and Siam a similar practice survived to our own day.<sup>52</sup> Forms of seclusion arose by which girls were kept from providing or receiving temptation. In New Britain the richer parents confined their daughters, through five dangerous years, in huts guarded by virtuous old crones; the girls were never allowed to come out, and only their relatives could see them. Some tribes in Borneo kept their unmarried girls in solitary confinement.<sup>53</sup> From these primitive customs to the *purdah* of the Moslems and the Hindus is but a step, and indicates again how nearly "civilization" touches "savagery."

Modesty came with virginity and the patriarchate. There are many tribes which to this day show no shame in exposing the body;<sup>54</sup> indeed, some are ashamed to wear clothing. All Africa rocked with laughter when Livingstone begged his black hosts to put on some clothing before the arrival of his wife. The Queen of the Balonda was quite naked when she held court for Livingstone.<sup>55</sup> A small minority of tribes practise sex relations publicly, without any thought of shame.<sup>56</sup> At first modesty is the feeling of the woman that she is tabu in her periods. When marriage

by purchase takes form, and virginity in the daughter brings a profit to her father, seclusion and the compulsion to virginity beget in the girl a sense of obligation to chastity. Again, modesty is the feeling of the wife who, under purchase marriage, feels a financial obligation to her husband to refrain from such external sexual relations as cannot bring him any recompense. Clothing appears at this point, if motives of adornment and protection have not already engendered it; in many tribes women wore clothing only after marriage,<sup>88</sup> as a sign of their exclusive possession by a husband, and as a deterrent to gallantry; primitive man did not agree with the author of *Penguin Isle* that clothing encouraged lechery. Chastity, however, bears no necessary relation to clothing; some travelers report that morals in Africa vary inversely as the amount of dress.<sup>89</sup> It is clear that what men are ashamed of depends entirely upon the local tabus and customs of their group. Until recently a Chinese woman was ashamed to show her foot, an Arab woman her face, a Tuareg woman her mouth; but the women of ancient Egypt, of nineteenth-century India and of twentieth-century Bali (before prurient tourists came) never thought of shame at the exposure of their breasts.

We must not conclude that morals are worthless because they differ according to time and place, and that it would be wise to show our historic learning by at once discarding the moral customs of our group. A little anthropology is a dangerous thing. It is substantially true that—as Anatole France ironically expressed the matter—“morality is the sum of the prejudices of a community”;<sup>90</sup> and that, as Anacharsis put it among the Greeks, if one were to bring together all customs considered sacred by some group, and were then to take away all customs considered immoral by some group, nothing would remain. But this does not prove the worthlessness of morals; it only shows in what varied ways social order has been preserved. Social order is none the less necessary; the game must still have rules in order to be played; men must know what to expect of one another in the ordinary circumstances of life. Hence the unanimity with which the members of a society practise its moral code is quite as important as the contents of that code. Our heroic rejection of the customs and morals of our tribe, upon our adolescent discovery of their relativity, betrays the immaturity of our minds; given another decade and we begin to understand that there may be more wisdom in the moral code of the group—the formulated experience of generations of the race—than can be explained in a college course. Sooner or later the disturbing realization comes to us

that even that which we cannot understand may be true. The institutions, conventions, customs and laws that make up the complex structure of a society are the work of a hundred centuries and a billion minds; and one mind must not expect to comprehend them in one lifetime, much less in twenty years. We are warranted in concluding that morals are relative, and indispensable.

Since old and basic customs represent a natural selection of group ways after centuries of trial and error, we must expect to find some social utility, or survival value, in virginity and modesty, despite their historical relativity, their association with marriage by purchase, and their contributions to neurosis. Modesty was a strategic retreat which enabled the girl, where she had any choice, to select her mate more deliberately, or compel him to show finer qualities before winning her; and the very obstructions it raised against desire generated those sentiments of romantic love which heightened her value in his eyes. The inculcation of virginity destroyed the naturalness and ease of primitive sexual life; but, by discouraging early sex development and premature motherhood, it lessened the gap—which tends to widen disruptively as civilization develops—between economic and sexual maturity. Probably it served in this way to strengthen the individual physically and mentally, to lengthen adolescence and training, and so to lift the level of the race.

As the institution of property developed, adultery graduated from a venial into a mortal sin. Half of the primitive peoples known to us attach no great importance to it.<sup>88</sup> The rise of property not only led to the exaction of complete fidelity from the woman, but generated in the male a proprietary attitude towards her; even when he lent her to a guest it was because she belonged to him in body and soul. *Suttee* was the completion of this conception; the woman must go down into the master's grave along with his other belongings. Under the patriarchy adultery was classed with theft;<sup>89</sup> it was, so to speak, an infringement of patent. Punishment for it varied through all degrees of severity from the indifference of the simpler tribes to the disembowelment of adulteresses among certain California Indians.\* After centuries of punishment the new virtue of wifely fidelity was firmly established, and had generated an appropriate conscience in the feminine heart. Many Indian tribes surprised their conquerors by the unapproachable virtue of their squaws; and certain male travelers have hoped that the women of Europe and America might some day equal in marital faithfulness the wives of the Zulus and the Papuans.<sup>90</sup>

It was easier for the Papuans, since among them, as among most primitive peoples, there were few impediments to the divorce of the woman by the man. Unions seldom lasted more than a few years among the American Indians. "A large proportion of the old and middle-aged men," says Schoolcraft, "have had many different wives, and their children, scattered around the country, are unknown to them."<sup>101</sup> They "laugh at Europeans for having only one wife, and that for life; they consider that the Good Spirit formed them to be happy, and not to continue together unless their tempers and dispositions were congenial."<sup>102</sup> The Cherokees changed wives three or four times a year; the conservative Samoans kept them as long as three years.<sup>103</sup> With the coming of a settled agricultural life, unions became more permanent. Under the patriarchal system the man found it uneconomical to divorce a wife, for this meant, in effect, to lose a profitable slave.<sup>104</sup> As the family became the productive unit of society, tilling the soil together, it prospered—other things equal—according to its size and cohesion; it was found to some advantage that the union of the mates should continue until the last child was reared. By that time no energy remained for a new romance, and the lives of the parents had been forged into one by common work and trials. Only with the passage to urban industry, and the consequent reduction of the family in size and economic importance, has divorce become widespread again.

In general, throughout history, men have wanted many children, and therefore have called motherhood sacred; while women, who know more about reproduction, have secretly rebelled against this heavy assignment, and have used an endless variety of means to reduce the burdens of maternity. Primitive men do not usually care to restrict population; under normal conditions children are profitable, and the male regrets only that they cannot all be sons. It is the woman who invents abortion, infanticide and contraception—for even the last occurs, sporadically, among primitive peoples.<sup>105</sup> It is astonishing to find how similar are the motives of the "savage" to the "civilized" woman in preventing birth: to escape the burden of rearing offspring, to preserve a youthful figure, to avert the disgrace of extramarital motherhood, to avoid death, etc. The simplest means of reducing maternity was the refusal of the man by the woman during the period of nursing, which might be prolonged for many years. Sometimes, as among the Cheyenne Indians, the women developed the custom of refusing to bear a second child until the first was ten years old. In New Britain the women had no children till two or four years after marriage.



The Guaycurus of Brazil were constantly diminishing because the women would bear no children till the age of thirty. Among the Papuans abortion was frequent; "children are burdensome," said the women; "we are weary of them; we go dead." Some Maori tribes used herbs or induced artificial malposition of the uterus, to prevent conception"

When abortion failed, infanticide remained. Most nature peoples permitted the killing of the newborn child if it was deformed, or diseased, or a bastard, or if its mother had died in giving it birth. As if any reason would be good in the task of limiting population to the available means of subsistence, many tribes killed infants whom they considered to have been born under unlucky circumstances: so the Bondei natives strangled all children who entered the world headfirst; the Kamchadals killed babes born in stormy weather; Madagascar tribes exposed, drowned, or buried alive children who made their *début* in March or April, or on a Wednesday or a Friday, or in the last week of the month. If a woman gave birth to twins it was, in some tribes, held proof of adultery, since no man could be the father of two children at the same time; and therefore one or both of the children suffered death. The practice of infanticide was particularly prevalent among nomads, who found children a problem on their long marches. The Bangerang tribe of Victoria killed half their children at birth; the Lenguas of the Paraguayan Chaco allowed only one child per family per seven years to survive; the Abipones achieved a French economy in population by rearing a boy and a girl in each household, killing off other offspring as fast as they appeared. Where famine conditions existed or threatened, most tribes strangled the newborn, and some tribes ate them. Usually it was the girl that was most subject to infanticide; occasionally she was tortured to death with a view to inducing the soul to appear, in its next incarnation, in the form of a boy.<sup>68</sup> Infanticide was practised without cruelty and without remorse; for in the first moments after delivery, apparently, the mother felt no instinctive love for the child.

Once the child had been permitted to live a few days, it was safe against infanticide; soon parental love was evoked by its helpless simplicity, and in most cases it was treated more affectionately by its primitive parents than the average child of the higher races.<sup>69</sup> For lack of milk or soft food the mother nursed the child from two to four years, sometimes for twelve;<sup>70</sup> one traveler describes a boy who had learned to smoke before he was weaned;<sup>71</sup> and often a youngster running about with other children would interrupt his play—or his work—to go and be nursed by his

mother." The Negro mother at work carried her infant on her back, and sometimes fed it by slinging her breasts over her shoulder." Primitive discipline was indulgent but not ruinous; at an early age the child was left to face for itself the consequences of its stupidity, its insolence, or its pugnacity; and learning went on apace. Filial, as well as parental, love was highly developed in natural society."

Dangers and disease were frequent in primitive childhood, and mortality was high. Youth was brief, for at an early age marital and martial responsibility began, and soon the individual was lost in the heavy tasks of replenishing and defending the group. The women were consumed in caring for children, the men in providing for them. When the youngest child had been reared the parents were worn out; as little space remained for individual life at the end as at the beginning. Individualism, like liberty, is a luxury of civilization. Only with the dawn of history were a sufficient number of men and women freed from the burdens of hunger, reproduction and war to create the intangible values of leisure, culture and art.

### III. SOCIAL MORALITY

*The nature of virtue and vice—Greed—Dishonesty—Violence—  
Homicide—Suicide—The socialization of the individual—  
Altruism—Hospitality—Manners—Tribal limits of moral-  
ity—Primitive vs. modern morals—Religion and morals*

Part of the function of parentage is the transmission of a moral code. For the child is more animal than human; it has humanity thrust upon it day by day as it receives the moral and mental heritage of the race. Biologically it is badly equipped for civilization, since its instincts provide only for traditional and basic situations, and include impulses more adapted to the jungle than to the town. Every vice was once a virtue, necessary in the struggle for existence; it became a vice only when it survived the conditions that made it indispensable; a vice, therefore, is not an advanced form of behavior, but usually an atavistic throwback to ancient and superseded ways. It is one purpose of a moral code to adjust the unchanged—or slowly changing—impulses of human nature to the changing needs and circumstances of social life.

Greed, acquisitiveness, dishonesty, cruelty and violence were for so many generations useful to animals and men that not all our laws, our

education, our morals and our religions can quite stamp them out; some of them, doubtless, have a certain survival value even today. The animal gorges himself because he does not know when he may find food again; this uncertainty is the origin of greed. The Yakuts have been known to eat forty pounds of meat in one day; and similar stories, only less heroic, are told of the Eskimos and the natives of Australia.<sup>75</sup> Economic security is too recent an achievement of civilization to have eliminated this natural greed; it still appears in the insatiable acquisitiveness whereby the fretful modern man or woman stores up gold, or other goods, that may in emergency be turned into food. Greed for drink is not as widespread as greed for food, for most human aggregations have centered around some water supply. Nevertheless, the drinking of intoxicants is almost universal; not so much because men are greedy as because they are cold and wish to be warmed, or unhappy and wish to forget—or simply because the water available to them is not fit to drink.

Dishonesty is not so ancient as greed, for hunger is older than property. The simplest "savages" seem to be the most honest.<sup>76</sup> "Their word is sacred," said Kolben of the Hottentots; they know "nothing of the corruptness and faithless arts of Europe."<sup>77</sup> As international communications improved, this naïve honesty disappeared; Europe has taught the gentle art to the Hottentots. In general, dishonesty rises with civilization, because under civilization the stakes of diplomacy are larger, there are more things to be stolen, and education makes men clever. When property develops among primitive men, lying and stealing come in its train.<sup>78</sup>

Crimes of violence are as old as greed; the struggle for food, land and mates has in every generation fed the earth with blood, and has offered a dark background for the fitful light of civilization. Primitive man was cruel because he had to be; life taught him that he must have an arm always ready to strike, and a heart apt for "natural killing." The blackest page in anthropology is the story of primitive torture, and of the joy that many primitive men and women seem to have taken in the infliction of pain.<sup>79</sup> Much of this cruelty was associated with war; within the tribe manners were less ferocious, and primitive men treated one another—and even their slaves—with a quite civilized kindliness.<sup>80</sup> But since men had to kill vigorously in war, they learned to kill also in time of peace; for to many a primitive mind no argument is settled until one of the disputants is dead. Among many tribes murder, even of another member of the same

clan, aroused far less horror than it used to do with us. The Fuegians punished a murderer merely by exiling him until his fellows had forgotten his crime. The Kaffirs considered a murderer unclean, and required that he should blacken his face with charcoal; but after a while, if he washed himself, rinsed his mouth, and dyed himself brown, he was received into society again. The savages of Futuna, like our own, looked upon a murderer as a hero.<sup>81</sup> In several tribes no woman would marry a man who had not killed some one, in fair fight or foul; hence the practice of head-hunting, which survives in the Philippines today. The Dyak who brought back most heads from such a man-hunt had the choice of all the girls in his village; these were eager for his favors, feeling that through him they might become the mothers of brave and potent men.<sup>82</sup>

Where food is dear life is cheap. Eskimo sons must kill their parents when these have become so old as to be helpless and useless; failure to kill them in such cases would be considered a breach of filial duty.<sup>83</sup> Even his own life seems cheap to primitive man, for he kills himself with a readiness rivaled only by the Japanese. If an offended person commits suicide, or mutilates himself, the offender must imitate him or become a pariah;<sup>84</sup> so old is *hara-kiri*. Any reason may suffice for suicide: some Indian women of North America killed themselves because their men had assumed the privilege of scolding them; and a young Trobriand Islander committed suicide because his wife had smoked all his tobacco.<sup>85</sup>

To transmute greed into thrift, violence into argument, murder into litigation, and suicide into philosophy has been part of the task of civilization. It was a great advance when the strong consented to eat the weak by due process of law. No society can survive if it allows its members to behave toward one another in the same way in which it encourages them to behave as a group toward other groups; internal coöperation is the first law of external competition. The struggle for existence is not ended by mutual aid, it is incorporated, or transferred to the group. Other things equal, the ability to compete with rival groups will be proportionate to the ability of the individual members and families to combine with one another. Hence every society inculcates a moral code, and builds up in the heart of the individual, as its secret allies and aides, social dispositions that mitigate the natural war of life; it encourages—by calling them virtues—

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\* This is half the theme of Synge's drama, *The Playboy of the Western World*.

those qualities or habits in the individual which redound to the advantage of the group, and discourages contrary qualities by calling them vices. In this way the individual is in some outward measure socialized, and the animal becomes a citizen.

It was hardly more difficult to generate social sentiments in the soul of the "savage" than it is to raise them now in the heart of modern man. The struggle for life encouraged communalism, but the struggle for property intensifies individualism. Primitive man was perhaps readier than contemporary man to coöperate with his fellows; social solidarity came more easily to him since he had more perils and interests in common with his group, and less possessions to separate him from the rest.<sup>86</sup> The natural man was violent and greedy; but he was also kindly and generous, ready to share even with strangers, and to make presents to his guests.<sup>87</sup> Every schoolboy knows that primitive hospitality, in many tribes, went to the extent of offering to the traveler the wife or daughter of the host.<sup>88</sup> To decline such an offer was a serious offense, not only to the host but to the woman; these are among the perils faced by missionaries. Often the later treatment of the guest was determined by the manner in which he had acquitted himself of these responsibilities.<sup>89</sup> Uncivilized man appears to have felt proprietary, but not sexual, jealousy; it did not disturb him that his wife had "known" men before marrying him, or now slept with his guest; but as her owner, rather than her lover, he would have been incensed to find her cohabiting with another man without his consent. Some African husbands lent their wives to strangers for a consideration.<sup>90</sup>

The rules of courtesy were as complex in most simple peoples as in advanced nations.<sup>91</sup> Each group had formal modes of salutation and farewell. Two individuals, on meeting, rubbed noses, or smelled each other, or gently bit each other;<sup>92</sup> as we have seen, they never kissed. Some crude tribes were more polite than the modern average; the Dyak head-hunters, we are told, were "gentle and peaceful" in their home life, and the Indians of Central America considered the loud talking and brusque behavior of the white man as signs of poor breeding and a primitive culture.<sup>93</sup>

Almost all groups agree in holding other groups to be inferior to themselves. The American Indians looked upon themselves as the chosen people, specially created by the Great Spirit as an uplifting example for mankind. One Indian tribe called itself "The Only Men"; another called itself "Men of Men"; the Caribs said, "We alone are people." The Eskimos believed that the Europeans had come to Greenland to learn manners and virtues.<sup>94</sup> Consequently it seldom occurred to primitive man to extend to other tribes the moral restraints which he acknowledged in dealing with his own; he

frankly conceived it to be the function of morals to give strength and coherence to his group against other groups. Commandments and tabus applied only to the people of his tribe; with others, except when they were his guests, he might go as far as he dared.<sup>66</sup>

Moral progress in history lies not so much in the improvement of the moral code as in the enlargement of the area within which it is applied. The morals of modern man are not unquestionably superior to those of primitive man, though the two groups of codes may differ considerably in content, practice and profession; but modern morals are, in normal times, extended—though with decreasing intensity—to a greater number of people than before.\* As tribes were gathered up into those larger units called states, morality overflowed its tribal bounds; and as communication—or a common danger—united and assimilated states, morals seeped through frontiers, and some men began to apply their commandments to all Europeans, to all whites, at last to all men. Perhaps there have always been idealists who wished to love all men as their neighbors, and perhaps in every generation they have been futile voices crying in a wilderness of nationalism and war. But probably the number—even the relative number—of such men has increased. There are no morals in diplomacy, and *la politique n'a pas d'entrailles*; but there are morals in international trade, merely because such trade cannot go on without some degree of restraint, regulation, and confidence. Trade began in piracy; it culminates in morality.

Few societies have been content to rest their moral codes upon so frankly rational a basis as economic and political utility. For the individual is not endowed by nature with any disposition to subordinate his personal interests to those of the group, or to obey irksome regulations for which there are no visible means of enforcement. To provide, so to speak, an invisible watchman, to strengthen the social impulses against the individualistic by powerful hopes and fears, societies have not invented but made use of, religion. The ancient geographer Strabo expressed the most advanced views on this subject nineteen hundred years ago:

For in dealing with a crowd of women, at least, or with any promiscuous mob, a philosopher cannot influence them by reason or exhort them to reverence, piety and faith; nay, there is need of religious fear also, and this cannot be aroused without myths and marvels. For thunderbolt, aegis, trident, torches, snakes, thyrsus-

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\* However, the range within which the moral code is applied has narrowed since the Middle Ages, as the result of the rise of nationalism.

lances—arms of the gods—are myths, and so is the entire ancient theology. But the founders of states gave their sanction to these things as bugbears wherewith to scare the simple-minded. Now since this is the nature of mythology, and since it has come to have its place in the social and civil scheme of life as well as in the history of actual facts, the ancients clung to their system of education for children and applied it up to the age of maturity; and by means of poetry they believed that they could satisfactorily discipline every period of life. But now, after a long time, the writing of history and the present-day philosophy have come to the front. Philosophy, however, is for the few, whereas poetry is more useful to the people at large.<sup>99</sup>

Morals, then, are soon endowed with religious sanctions, because mystery and supernaturalism lend a weight which can never attach to things empirically known and genetically understood; men are more easily ruled by imagination than by science. But was this moral utility the source or origin of religion?

#### IV. RELIGION

##### *Primitive atheists*

If we define religion as the worship of supernatural forces, we must observe at the outset that some peoples have apparently no religion at all. Certain Pygmy tribes of Africa had no observable cult or rites; they had no totem, no fetishes, and no gods; they buried their dead without ceremony, and seem to have paid no further attention to them; they lacked even superstitions, if we may believe otherwise incredible travelers.<sup>100</sup> The dwarfs of the Cameroon recognized only malevolent deities, and did nothing to placate them, on the ground that it was useless to try. The Veddahs of Ceylon went no further than to admit the possibility of gods and immortal souls; but they offered no prayers or sacrifices. Asked about God they answered, as puzzled as the latest philosopher: "Is he on a rock? On a white-ant hill? On a tree? I never saw a god!"<sup>101</sup> The North American Indians conceived a god, but did not worship him; like Epicurus they thought him too remote to be concerned in their affairs.<sup>102</sup> An Abipone Indian rebuffed a metaphysical inquirer in a manner quite Confucian: "Our grandfathers and our great-grandfathers were wont to contemplate the earth alone, solicitous only to see whether the plain afford grass and water

for their horses. They never troubled themselves about what went on in the heavens, and who was the creator and governor of the stars." The Eskimos, when asked who had made the heavens and the earth, always replied, "We do not know."<sup>91</sup> A Zulu was asked: "When you see the sun rising and setting, and the trees growing, do you know who made them and governs them?" He answered, simply: "No, we see them, but cannot tell how they came; we suppose that they came by themselves."<sup>92</sup>

Such cases are exceptional, and the old belief that religion is universal is substantially correct. To the philosopher this is one of the outstanding facts of history and psychology; he is not content to know that all religions contain much nonsense, but rather he is fascinated by the problem of the antiquity and persistence of belief. What are the sources of the indestructible piety of mankind?

### *1. The Sources of Religion*

#### *Fear—Wonder—Dreams—The soul—Animism*

Fear, as Lucretius said, was the first mother of the gods. Fear, above all, of death. Primitive life was beset with a thousand dangers, and seldom ended with natural decay; long before old age could come, violence or some strange disease carried off the great majority of men. Hence early man did not believe that death was ever natural;<sup>93</sup> he attributed it to the operation of supernatural agencies. In the mythology of the natives of New Britain death came to men by an error of the gods. The good god Kambinana told his foolish brother Korvouva, "Go down to men and tell them to cast their skins; so shall they avoid death. But tell the serpents that they must henceforth die." Korvouva mixed the messages; he delivered the secret of immortality to the snakes, and the doom of death to men.<sup>94</sup> Many tribes thought that death was due to the shrinkage of the skin, and that man would be immortal if only he could moult.<sup>95</sup>

Fear of death, wonder at the causes of chance events or unintelligible happenings, hope for divine aid and gratitude for good fortune, coöperated to generate religious belief. Wonder and mystery adhered particularly to sex and dreams, and the mysterious influence of heavenly bodies upon the earth and man. Primitive man marveled at the phantoms that he saw in sleep, and was struck with terror when he beheld, in his dreams, the figures of those whom he knew to be dead. He buried his dead in the



earth to prevent their return; he buried victuals and goods with the corpse lest it should come back to curse him; sometimes he left to the dead the house in which death had come, while he himself moved on to another shelter; in some places he carried the body out of the house not through a door but through a hole in the wall, and bore it rapidly three times around the dwelling, so that the spirit might forget the entrance and never haunt the home.<sup>100</sup>

Such experiences convinced early man that every living thing had a soul, or secret life, within it, which could be separated from the body in illness, sleep or death. "Let no one wake a man brusquely," said one of the Upanishads of ancient India, "for it is a matter difficult of cure if the soul find not its way back to him."<sup>101</sup> Not man alone but all things had souls; the external world was not insensitive or dead, it was intensely alive;<sup>102</sup> if this were not so, thought primitive philosophy, nature would be full of inexplicable occurrences, like the motion of the sun, or the death-dealing lightning, or the whispering of the trees. The personal way of conceiving objects and events preceded the impersonal or abstract; religion preceded philosophy. Such animism is the poetry of religion, and the religion of poetry. We may see it at its lowest in the wonder-struck eyes of a dog that watches a paper blown before him by the wind, and perhaps believes that a spirit moves the paper from within; and we find the same feeling at its highest in the language of the poet. To the primitive mind—and to the poet in all ages—mountains, rivers, rocks, trees, stars, sun, moon and sky are sacramentally holy things, because they are the outward and visible signs of inward and invisible souls. To the early Greeks the sky was the god Ouranos, the moon was Selene, the earth was Gæa, the sea was Poseidon, and everywhere in the woods was Pan. To the ancient Germans the forest primeval was peopled with genii, elves, trolls, giants, dwarfs and fairies; these sylvan creatures survive in the music of Wagner and the poetic dramas of Ibsen. The simpler peasants of Ireland still believe in fairies, and no poet or playwright can belong to the Irish literary revival unless he employs them. There is wisdom as well as beauty in this animism; it is good and nourishing to treat all things as alive. To the sensitive spirit, says the most sensitive of contemporary writers,

Nature begins to present herself as a vast congeries of separate living entities, some visible, some invisible, but all possessed of

mind-stuff, all possessed of matter-stuff, and all blending mind and matter together in the basic mystery of being. . . . The world is full of gods! From every planet and from every stone there emanates a presence that disturbs us with a sense of the multitudinousness of god-like powers, strong and feeble, great and little, moving between heaven and earth upon their secret purposes.<sup>109</sup>

## 2. *The Objects of Religion*

*The sun—The stars—The earth—Sex—Animals—Totemism—The transition to human gods—Ghost-worship—Ancestor-worship*

Since all things have souls, or contain hidden gods, the objects of religious worship are numberless. They fall into six classes: celestial, terrestrial, sexual, animal, human, and divine. Of course we shall never know which of our universe of objects was worshiped first. One of the first was probably the moon. Just as our own folk-lore speaks of the "*man* in the moon," so primitive legend conceived the moon as a bold male who caused women to menstruate by seducing them. He was a favorite god with women, who worshiped him as their protecting deity. The pale orb was also the measure of time; it was believed to control the weather, and to make both rain and snow; even the frogs prayed to it for rain.<sup>101</sup>

We do not know when the sun replaced the moon as the lord of the sky in primitive religion. Perhaps it was when vegetation replaced hunting, and the transit of the sun determined the seasons of sowing and reaping, and its heat was recognized as the main cause of the bounty of the soil. Then the earth became a goddess fertilized by the hot rays, and men worshiped the great orb as the father of all things living.<sup>102</sup> From this simple beginning sun-worship passed down into the pagan faiths of antiquity, and many a later god was only a personification of the sun. Anaxagoras was exiled by the learned Greeks because he ventured the guess that the sun was not a god, but merely a ball of fire, about the size of the Peloponnesus. The Middle Ages kept a relic of sun-worship in the halo pictured around the heads of saints,<sup>103</sup> and in our own day the Emperor of Japan is regarded by most of his people as an incarnation of the sun-god.<sup>104</sup> There is hardly any superstition so old but it can be found flourishing somewhere today. Civilization is the precarious labor and luxury of a minority; the basic masses of mankind hardly change from millennium to millennium.

Like the sun and the moon, every star contained or was a god, and moved at the command of its indwelling spirit. Under Christianity these spirits became guiding angels, star-pilots, so to speak; and Kepler was not too scientific to believe in them. The sky itself was a great god, worshiped devotedly as giver and withholder of rain. Among many primitive peoples the word for god meant sky; among the Lubari and the Dinkas it meant rain. Among the Mongols the supreme god was *Tengri*—the sky; in China it was *Ti*—the sky; in Vedic India it was *Dyaus pitar*—the “father sky”; among the Greeks it was *Zeus*—the sky, the “cloud-compeller”; among the Persians it was *Abura*—the “azure sky”;<sup>109</sup> and among ourselves men still ask “Heaven” to protect them. The central point in most primitive mythology is the fertile mating of earth and sky.

For the earth, too, was a god, and every main aspect of it was presided over by some deity. Trees had souls quite as much as men, and it was plain murder to cut them down; the North American Indians sometimes attributed their defeat and decay to the fact that the whites had leveled the trees whose spirits had protected the Red Men. In the Molucca Islands blossoming trees were treated as pregnant; no noise, fire, or other disturbance was permitted to mar their peace; else, like a frightened woman, they might drop their fruit before time. In Amboyna no loud sounds were allowed near the rice in bloom lest it should abort into straw.<sup>110</sup> The ancient Gauls worshiped the trees of certain sacred forests; and the Druid priests of England revered as holy that mistletoe of the oak which still suggests a pleasant ritual. The veneration of trees, springs, rivers and mountains is the oldest traceable religion of Asia.<sup>111</sup> Many mountains were holy places, homes of thundering gods. Earthquakes were the shoulder-shrugging of irked or irate deities: the Fijians ascribed such agitations to the earth-god's turning over in his sleep; and the Samoans, when the soil trembled, gnawed the ground and prayed to the god Mafuie to stop, lest he should shake the planet to pieces.<sup>112</sup> Almost everywhere the earth was the Great Mother; our language, which is often the precipitate of primitive or unconscious beliefs, suggests to this day a kinship between matter (*materia*) and mother (*mater*).<sup>113</sup> Ishtar and Cybele, Demeter and Ceres, Aphrodite and Venus and Freya—these are comparatively late forms of the ancient goddesses of the earth, whose fertility constituted the bounty of the fields; their birth and marriage, their death and triumphant resurrection were conceived as the symbols or causes of the sprouting, the decay,

and the vernal renewal of all vegetation. These deities reveal by their gender the primitive association of agriculture with woman. When agriculture became the dominant mode of human life, the vegetation goddesses reigned supreme. Most early gods were of the gentler sex; they were superseded by male deities presumably as a heavenly reflex of the victorious patriarchal family.<sup>133</sup>

Just as the profound poetry of the primitive mind sees a secret divinity in the growth of a tree, so it sees a supernatural agency in the conception or birth of a child. The "savage" does not know anything about the ovum or the sperm; he sees only the external structures involved, and deifies them; they, too, have spirits in them, and must be worshiped, for are not these mysteriously creative powers the most marvelous of all? In them, even more than in the soil, the miracle of fertility and growth appears; therefore they must be the most direct embodiments of the divine potency. Nearly all ancient peoples worshiped sex in some form and ritual, and not the lowest people but the highest expressed their worship most completely; we shall find such worship in Egypt and India, Babylonia and Assyria, Greece and Rome. The sexual character and functions of primitive deities were held in high regard,<sup>134</sup> not through any obscenity of mind, but through a passion for fertility in women and in the earth. Certain animals, like the bull and the snake, were worshiped as apparently possessing or symbolizing in a high degree the divine power of reproduction. The snake in the story of Eden is doubtless a phallic symbol, representing sex as the origin of evil, suggesting sexual awakening as the beginning of the knowledge of good and evil, and perhaps insinuating a certain proverbial connection between mental innocence and bliss.\*

There is hardly an animal in nature, from the Egyptian scarab to the Hindu elephant, that has not somewhere been worshiped as a god. The Ojibwa Indians gave the name of *totem* to their special sacred animal, to the clan that worshiped it, and to any member of the clan; and this confused word has stumbled into anthropology as *totemism*, denoting vaguely any worship of a particular object—usually an animal or a plant—as especially sacred to a group. Varieties of totemism have been found scattered over apparently unconnected regions of the earth, from the Indian tribes of North America to the natives of Africa, the Dravidians

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\* Cf. Chap. XII, § vi below.

of India, and the tribes of Australia.<sup>115</sup> The totem as a religious object helped to unify the tribe, whose members thought themselves bound up with it or descended from it; the Iroquois, in semi-Darwinian fashion, believed that they were sprung from the primeval mating of women with bears, wolves and deer. The totem—as object or as symbol—became a useful sign of relationship and distinction for primitive peoples, and lapsed, in the course of secularization, into a mascot or emblem, like the lion or eagle of nations, the elk or moose of our fraternal orders, and those dumb animals that are used to represent the elephantine immobility and mulish obstreperousness of our political parties. The dove, the fish and the lamb, in the symbolism of nascent Christianity, were relics of totemic adoration; even the lowly pig was once a totem of prehistoric Jews.<sup>116</sup> In most cases the totem animal was tabu—i.e., forbidden, not to be touched; under certain circumstances it might be eaten, but only as a religious act, amounting to the ritual eating of the god.\* The Gallas of Abyssinia ate in solemn ceremony the fish that they worshiped, and said, "We feel the spirit moving within us as we eat." The good missionaries who preached the Gospel to the Gallas were shocked to find among these simple folk a ritual so strangely similar to the central ceremony of the Mass.<sup>117</sup>

Probably fear was the origin of totemism, as of so many cults; men prayed to animals because the animals were powerful, and had to be appeased. As hunting cleared the woods of the beasts, and gave way to the comparative security of agricultural life, the worship of animals declined, though it never quite disappeared; and the ferocity of the first human gods was probably carried over from the animal deities whom they replaced. The transition is visible in those famous stories of metamorphoses, or changes of form, that are found in the Ovids of all languages, and tell how gods had been, or had become, animals. Later the animal qualities adhered to them obstinately, as the odor of the stable might loyally attend some rural Casanova; even in the complex mind of Homer *glaukopis Athene* had the eyes of an owl, and *Here boöpis* had the eyes of a cow. Egyptian and Babylonian gods or ogres with the face of a human being

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\* Freud, with characteristic imaginativeness, believes that the totem was a transfigured symbol of the father, revered and hated for his omnipotence, and rebelliously murdered and eaten by his sons.<sup>118</sup> Durkheim thought that the totem was a symbol of the clan, revered and hated (hence held "sacred" and "unclean") by the individual for its omnipotence and irksome dictatorship; and that the religious attitude was originally the feeling of the individual toward the authoritarian group.<sup>119</sup>

and the body of a beast reveal the same transition and make the same confession—that many human gods were once animal deities.<sup>129</sup>

Most human gods, however, seem to have been, in the beginning, merely idealized dead men. The appearance of the dead in dreams was enough to establish the worship of the dead, for worship, if not the child, is at least the brother, of fear. Men who had been powerful during life, and therefore had been feared, were especially likely to be worshiped after their death.<sup>130</sup> Among several primitive peoples the word for god actually meant "a dead man"; even today the English word *spirit* and the German word *Geist* mean both ghost and soul. The Greeks invoked their dead precisely as the Christians were to invoke the saints.<sup>131</sup> So strong was the belief—first generated in dreams—in the continued life of the dead, that primitive men sometimes sent messages to them in the most literal way; in one tribe the chief, to convey such a letter, recited it verbally to a slave, and then cut off his head for special delivery; if the chief forgot something he sent another decapitated slave as a postscript.<sup>132</sup>

Gradually the cult of the ghost became the worship of ancestors. All the dead were feared, and had to be propitiated, lest they should curse and blight the lives of the living. This ancestor-worship was so well adapted to promote social authority and continuity, conservatism and order, that it soon spread to every region of the earth. It flourished in Egypt, Greece and Rome, and survives vigorously in China and Japan today; many peoples worship ancestors but no god.<sup>133</sup> The institution held the family powerfully together despite the hostility of successive generations, and provided an invisible structure for many early societies. And just as compulsion grew into conscience, so fear graduated into love; the ritual of ancestor-worship, probably generated by terror, later aroused the sentiment of awe, and finally developed piety and devotion. It is the tendency of gods to begin as ogres and to end as loving fathers; the idol passes into an ideal as the growing security, peacefulness and moral sense of the worshippers pacify and transform the features of their once ferocious deities. The slow progress of civilization is reflected in the tardy amiability of the gods.

The idea of a human god was a late step in a long development; it was slowly differentiated, through many stages, out of the conception of an ocean or multitude of spirits and ghosts surrounding and inhabiting every-

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\* Relics of ancestor-worship may be found among ourselves in our care and visitation of graves, and our masses and prayers for the dead.

thing. From the fear and worship of vague and formless spirits men seem to have passed to adoration of celestial, vegetative and sexual powers, then to reverence for animals, and worship of ancestors. The notion of God as Father was probably derived from ancestor-worship; it meant originally that men had been physically begotten by the gods.<sup>123</sup> In primitive theology there is no sharp or generic distinction between gods and men; to the early Greeks, for example, their gods were ancestors, and their ancestors were gods. A further development came when, out of the medley of ancestors, certain men and women who had been especially distinguished were singled out for clearer deification; so the greater kings became gods, sometimes even before their death. But with this development we reach the historic civilizations.

### 3. *The Methods of Religion*

*Magic—Vegetation rites—Festivals of license—Myths of the  
resurrected god—Magic and superstition—Magic and  
science—Priests*

Having conceived a world of spirits, whose nature and intent were unknown to him, primitive man sought to propitiate them and to enlist them in his aid. Hence to animism, which is the essence of primitive religion, was added magic, which is the soul of primitive ritual. The Polynesians recognized a very ocean of magic power, which they called *mana*; the magician, they thought, merely tapped this infinite supply of miraculous capacity. The methods by which the spirits, and later the gods, were suborned to human purposes were for the most part "sympathetic magic"—a desired action was suggested to the deities by a partial or imitative performance of the action by men. To make rain fall some primitive magicians poured water out upon the ground, preferably from a tree. The Kaffirs, threatened by drought, asked a missionary to go into the fields with an opened umbrella.<sup>124</sup> In Sumatra a barren woman made an image of a child and held it in her lap, hoping thereby to become pregnant. In the Babar Archipelago the would-be mother fashioned a doll out of red cotton, pretended to suckle it, and repeated a magic formula; then she sent word through the village that she was pregnant, and her friends came to congratulate her; only a very obstinate reality could refuse to emulate this imagination. Among the Dyaks of Borneo the magician, to ease the pains of a woman about to deliver, would go through the contortions of childbirth himself,

as a magic suggestion to the foetus to come forth; sometimes the magician slowly rolled a stone down his belly and dropped it to the ground, in the hope that the backward child would imitate it. In the Middle Ages a spell was cast upon an enemy by sticking pins into a waxen image of him;<sup>127</sup> the Peruvian Indians burned people in effigy, and called it burning the soul.<sup>128</sup> Even the modern mob is not above such primitive magic.

These methods of suggestion by example were applied especially to the fertilization of the soil. Zulu medicine-men fric'd the genitals of a man who had died in full vigor, ground the mixture into a powder, and strewed it over the fields.<sup>129</sup> Some peoples chose a King and Queen of the May, or a Whitsun bridegroom and bride, and married them publicly, so that the soil might take heed and flower forth. In certain localities the rite included the public consummation of the marriage, so that Nature, though she might be nothing but a dull clod, would have no excuse for misunderstanding her duty. In Java the peasants and their wives, to ensure the fertility of the rice-fields, mated in the midst of them.<sup>130</sup> For primitive men did not conceive the growth of the soil in terms of nitrogen; they thought of it—apparently without knowing of sex in plants—in the same terms as those whereby they interpreted the fruitfulness of woman; our very terms recall their poetic faith.

Festivals of promiscuity, coming in nearly all cases at the season of sowing, served partly as a moratorium on morals (recalling the comparative freedom of sex relations in earlier days), partly as a means of fertilizing the wives of sterile men, and partly as a ceremony of suggestion to the earth in spring to abandon her wintry reserve, accept the proffered seed, and prepare to deliver herself of a generous litter of food. Such festivals appear among a great number of nature peoples, but particularly among the Cameroons of the Congo, the Kaffirs, the Hottentots and the Bantus. "Their harvest festivals," says the Reverend H. Rowley of the Bantus,

are akin in character to the feasts of Bacchus. . . . It is impossible to witness them without being ashamed. . . . Not only is full sexual license permitted to the neophytes, and indeed in most cases enjoined, but any visitor attending the festival is encouraged to indulge in licentiousness. Prostitution is freely indulged in, and adultery is not viewed with any sense of heinousness, on account of the surroundings. No man attending the festival is allowed to have intercourse with his wife.<sup>131</sup>



Similar festivals appear in the historic civilizations: in the Bacchic celebrations of Greece, the *Saturnalia* of Rome, the *Fête des Fous* in medieval France, May Day in England, and the Carnival or *Mardi Gras* of contemporary ways.

Here and there, as among the Pawnees and the Indians of Guayaquil, vegetation rites took on a less attractive form. A man—or, in later and milder days, an animal—was sacrificed to the earth at sowing time, so that it might be fertilized by his blood. When the harvest came it was interpreted as the resurrection of the dead man; the victim was given, before and after his death, the honors of a god; and from this origin arose, in a thousand forms, the almost universal myth of a god dying for his people, and then returning triumphantly to life.<sup>130</sup> Poetry embroidered magic, and transformed it into theology. Solar myths mingled harmoniously with vegetation rites, and the legend of a god dying and reborn came to apply not only to the winter death and spring revival of the earth but to the autumnal and vernal equinoxes, and the waning and waxing of the day. For the coming of night was merely a part of this tragic drama; daily the sun-god was born and died; every sunset was a crucifixion, and every sunrise was a resurrection.

Human sacrifice, of which we have here but one of many varieties, seems to have been honored at some time or another by almost every people. On the island of Carolina in the Gulf of Mexico a great hollow metal statue of an old Mexican deity has been found, within which still lay the remains of human beings apparently burned to death as an offering to the god.<sup>131</sup> Every one knows of the Moloch to whom the Phoenicians, the Carthaginians, and occasionally other Semites, offered human victims. In our own time the custom has been practised in Rhodesia.<sup>132</sup> Probably it was bound up with cannibalism; men thought that the gods had tastes like their own. As religious beliefs change more slowly than other creeds, and rites change more slowly than beliefs, this divine cannibalism survived after human cannibalism disappeared.<sup>133</sup> Slowly, however, evolving morals changed even religious rites; the gods imitated the increasing gentleness of their worshipers, and resigned themselves to accepting animal instead of human meat; a hind took the place of Iphigenia, and a ram was substituted for Abraham's son. In time the gods did not receive even the animal; the priests liked savory food, ate all the edible parts of the sacrificial victim themselves, and offered upon the altar only the entrails and the bones.<sup>134</sup>

Since early man believed that he acquired the powers of whatever organism he consumed, he came naturally to the conception of eating the god. In many cases he ate the flesh and drank the blood of the human god whom he had deified and fattened for the sacrifice. When, through increased continuity in the food-supply, he became more humane, he substituted images for the victim, and was content to eat these. In ancient Mexico an image of the god was made of grain, seeds and vegetables, was kneaded with the blood of boys sacrificed for the purpose, and was then consumed as a religious ceremony of eating the god. Similar ceremonies have been found in many primitive tribes. Usually the participant was required to fast before eating the sacred image; and the priest turned the image into the god by the power of magic formulas.<sup>137</sup>

Magic begins in superstition, and ends in science. A wilderness of weird beliefs came out of animism, and resulted in many strange formulas and rites. The Kukis encouraged themselves in war by the notion that all the enemies they slew would attend them as slaves in the after life. On the other hand a Bantu, when he had slain his foe, shaved his own head and anointed himself with goat-dung, to prevent the spirit of the dead man from returning to pester him. Almost all primitive peoples believed in the efficacy of curses, and the destructiveness of the "evil eye."<sup>138</sup> Australian natives were sure that the curse of a potent magician could kill at a hundred miles. The belief in witchcraft began early in human history, and has never quite disappeared. Fetishism\*—the worship of idols or other objects as having magic power—is still more ancient and indestructible. Since many amulets are limited to a special power, some peoples are heavily laden with a variety of them, so that they may be ready for any emergency.<sup>139</sup> Relics are a later and contemporary example of fetishes possessing magic powers; half the population of Europe wear some pendant or amulet which gives them supernatural protection or aid. At every step the history of civilization teaches us how slight and superficial a structure civilization is, and how precariously it is poised upon the apex of a never-extinct volcano of poor and oppressed barbarism, superstition and ignorance. Modernity is a cap superimposed upon the Middle Ages, which always remain.

The philosopher accepts gracefully this human need of supernatural

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\* From the Portuguese *feitico*, fabricated or factitious.

aid and comfort, and consoles himself by observing that just as animism generates poetry, so magic begets drama and science. Frazer has shown, with the exaggeration natural to a brilliant innovator, that the glories of science have their roots in the absurdities of magic. For since magic often failed, it became of advantage to the magician to discover natural operations by which he might help supernatural forces to produce the desired event. Slowly the natural means came to predominate, even though the magician, to preserve his standing with the people, concealed these natural means as well as he could, and gave the credit to supernatural magic—much as our own people often credit natural cures to magical prescriptions and pills. In this way magic gave birth to the physician, the chemist, the metallurgist, and the astronomer.<sup>100</sup>

More immediately, however, magic made the priest. Gradually, as religious rites became more numerous and complex, they outgrew the knowledge and competence of the ordinary man, and generated a special class which gave most of its time to the functions and ceremonies of religion. The priest as magician had access, through trance, inspiration or esoteric prayer, to the will of the spirits or gods, and could change that will for human purposes. Since such knowledge and skill seemed to primitive men the most valuable of all, and supernatural forces were conceived to affect man's fate at every turn, the power of the clergy became as great as that of the state; and from the latest societies to modern times the priest has vied and alternated with the warrior in dominating and disciplining men. Let Egypt, Judea and medieval Europe suffice as instances.

The priest did not create religion, he merely used it, as a statesman uses the impulses and customs of mankind; religion arises not out of sacerdotal invention or chicanery, but out of the persistent wonder, fear, insecurity, hopefulness and loneliness of men. The priest did harm by tolerating superstition and monopolizing certain forms of knowledge; but he limited and often discouraged superstition, he gave the people the rudiments of education, he acted as a repository and vehicle for the growing cultural heritage of the race, he consoled the weak in their inevitable exploitation by the strong, and he became the agent through which religion nourished art and propped up with supernatural aid the precarious structure of human morality. If he had not existed the people would have invented him.

#### 4. *The Moral Function of Religion*

##### *Religion and government—Tabu—Sexual tabus—The lag of religion—Secularization*

Religion supports morality by two means chiefly: myth and tabu. Myth creates the supernatural creed through which celestial sanctions may be given to forms of conduct socially (or sacerdotally) desirable; heavenly hopes and terrors inspire the individual to put up with restraints placed upon him by his masters and his group. Man is not naturally obedient, gentle, or chaste; and next to that ancient compulsion which finally generates conscience, nothing so quietly and continuously conduces to these uncongenial virtues as the fear of the gods. The institutions of property and marriage rest in some measure upon religious sanctions, and tend to lose their vigor in ages of unbelief. Government itself, which is the most unnatural and necessary of social mechanisms, has usually required the support of piety and the priest, as clever heretics like Napoleon and Mussolini soon discovered; and hence "a tendency to theocracy is incidental to all constitutions."<sup>14</sup> The power of the primitive chief is increased by the aid of magic and sorcery; and even our own government derives some sanctity from its annual recognition of the Pilgrims' God.

The Polynesians gave the word *tabu* to prohibitions sanctioned by religion. In the more highly developed of primitive societies such tabus took the place of what under civilization became laws. Their form was usually negative: certain acts and objects were declared "sacred" or "unclean"; and the two words meant in effect one warning: *untouchable*. So the Ark of the Covenant was tabu, and Uzzah was struck dead, we are told, for touching it to save it from falling.<sup>15</sup> Diodorus would have us believe that the ancient Egyptians ate one another in famine, rather than violate the tabu against eating the animal totem of the tribe.<sup>16</sup> In most primitive societies countless things were tabu; certain words and names were never to be pronounced, and certain days and seasons were tabu in the sense that work was forbidden at such times. All the knowledge, and some of the ignorance, of primitive men about food were expressed in dietetic tabus; and hygiene was inculcated by religion rather than by science or secular medicine.

The favorite object of primitive tabu was woman. A thousand super-

sstitutions made her, every now and then, untouchable, perilous, and "unclean." The moulders of the world's myths were unsuccessful husbands, for they agreed that woman was the root of all evil; this was a view sacred not only to Hebraic and Christian tradition, but to a hundred pagan mythologies. The strictest of primitive tabus was laid upon the menstruating woman; any man or thing that touched her at such times lost virtue or usefulness.<sup>144</sup> The Macusi of British Guiana forbade women to bathe at their periods lest they should poison the waters; and they forbade them to go into the forests on these occasions, lest they be bitten by enamored snakes.<sup>145</sup> Even childbirth was unclean, and after it the mother was to purify herself with laborious religious rites. Sexual relations, in most primitive peoples, were tabu not only in the menstrual period but whenever the woman was pregnant or nursing. Probably these prohibitions were originated by women themselves, out of their own good sense and for their own protection and convenience; but origins are easily forgotten, and soon woman found herself "impure" and "unclean." In the end she accepted man's point of view, and felt shame in her periods, even in her pregnancy. Out of such tabus as a partial source came modesty, the sense of sin, the view of sex as unclean, asceticism, priestly celibacy, and the subjection of woman.

Religion is not the basis of morals, but an aid to them; conceivably they could exist without it, and not infrequently they have progressed against its indifference or its obstinate resistance. In the earliest societies, and in some later ones, morals appear at times to be quite independent of religion; religion then concerns itself not with the ethics of conduct but with magic, ritual and sacrifice, and the good man is defined in terms of ceremonies dutifully performed and faithfully financed. As a rule religion sanctions not any absolute good (since there is none), but those norms of conduct which have established themselves by force of economic and social circumstance; like law it looks to the past for its judgments, and is apt to be left behind as conditions change and morals alter with them. So the Greeks learned to abhor incest while their mythologies still honored incestuous gods; the Christians practised monogamy while their Bible legalized polygamy; slavery was abolished while dominions sanctified it with unimpeachable Biblical authority; and in our own day the Church fights heroically for a moral code that the Industrial Revolution has obviously doomed. In the end terrestrial forces prevail; morals slowly adjust themselves to

economic invention, and religion reluctantly adjusts itself to moral change.\* The moral function of religion is to conserve established values, rather than to create new ones.

Hence a certain tension between religion and society marks the higher stages of every civilization. Religion begins by offering magical aid to harassed and bewildered men; it culminates by giving to a people that unity of morals and belief which seems so favorable to statesmanship and art; it ends by fighting suicidally in the lost cause of the past. For as knowledge grows or alters continually, it clashes with mythology and theology, which change with geological leisureliness. Priestly control of arts and letters is then felt as a galling shackle or hateful barrier, and intellectual history takes on the character of a "conflict between science and religion." Institutions which were at first in the hands of the clergy, like law and punishment, education and morals, marriage and divorce, tend to escape from ecclesiastical control, and become secular, perhaps profane. The intellectual classes abandon the ancient theology and—after some hesitation—the moral code allied with it; literature and philosophy become anti-clerical. The movement of liberation rises to an exuberant worship of reason, and falls to a paralyzing disillusionment with every dogma and every idea. Conduct, deprived of its religious supports, deteriorates into epicurean chaos; and life itself, shorn of consoling faith, becomes a burden alike to conscious poverty and to weary wealth. In the end a society and its religion tend to fall together, like body and soul, in a harmonious death. Meanwhile among the oppressed another myth arises, gives new form to human hope, new courage to human effort, and after centuries of chaos builds another civilization.

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\* Cf. the contemporary causation of birth control by urban industrialism, and the gradual acceptance of such control by the Church.

# The Mental Elements of Civilization

## I. LETTERS

*Language—Its animal background—Its human origins—Its development—Its results—Education—Initiation—Writing—Poetry*

IN the beginning was the word, for with it man became man. Without those strange noises called common nouns, thought was limited to individual objects or experiences sensorily—for the most part visually—remembered or conceived; presumably it could not think of classes as distinct from individual things, nor of qualities as distinct from objects, nor of objects as distinct from their qualities. Without words as class names one might think of this man, or that man, or that man; one could not think of Man, for the eye sees not Man but only men, not classes but particular things. The beginning of humanity came when some freak or crank, half animal and half man, squatted in a cave or in a tree, cracking his brain to invent the first common noun, the first sound-sign that would signify a *group* of like objects: *house* that would mean all houses, *man* that would mean all men, *light* that would mean every light that ever shone on land or sea. From that moment the mental development of the race opened upon a new and endless road. For words are to thought what tools are to work; the product depends largely on the growth of the tools.<sup>1</sup>

Since all origins are guesses, and *de fontibus non disputandum*, the imagination has free play in picturing the beginnings of speech. Perhaps the first form of language—which may be defined as communication through signs—was the love-call of one animal to another. In this sense the jungle, the woods and the prairie are alive with speech. Cries of warning or of terror, the call of the mother to the brood, the cluck and cackle of euphoric or reproductive ecstasy, the parliament of chatter from tree to tree, indicate the busy preparations made by the animal kingdom for the august speech of man. A wild girl found living among the animals in a forest near Châlons, France, had no other speech than hideous screeches and howls. These living noises of the woods seem meaningless to our

provincial ear; we are like the philosophical poodle Riquet, who says of M. Bergeret: "Everything uttered by my voice means something; but from my master's mouth comes much nonsense." Whitman and Craig discovered a strange correlation between the actions and the exclamations of pigeons; Dupont learned to distinguish twelve specific sounds used by fowl and doves, fifteen by dogs, and twenty-two by horned cattle; Garner found that the apes carried on their endless gossip with at least twenty different sounds, plus a repertory of gestures; and from these modest vocabularies a few steps bring us to the three hundred words that suffice some unpretentious men.\*

Gesture seems primary, speech secondary, in the earlier transmission of thought; and when speech fails, gesture comes again to the fore. Among the North American Indians, who had countless dialects, married couples were often derived from different tribes, and maintained communication and accord by gestures rather than speech; one couple known to Lewis Morgan used silent signs for three years. Gesture was so prominent in some Indian languages that the Arapahos, like some modern peoples, could hardly converse in the dark.<sup>8</sup> Perhaps the first human words were interjections, expressions of emotion as among animals; then demonstrative words accompanying gestures of direction; and imitative sounds that came in time to be the names of the objects or actions that they simulated. Even after indefinite millenniums of linguistic changes and complications every language still contains hundreds of imitative words—*roar*, *rush*, *murmur*, *tremor*, *giggle*, *groan*, *hiss*, *heave*, *hum*, *cackle*, etc.\* The Tecuna tribe, of ancient Brazil, had a perfect verb for sneeze: *baitschu*.<sup>9</sup> Out of such beginnings, *perhaps*, came the root-words of every language. Renan reduced all Hebrew words to five hundred roots, and Skeat nearly all European words to some four hundred stems.†

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\* Such onomatopoeia still remains a refuge in linguistic emergencies. The Englishman eating his first meal in China, and wishing to know the character of the meat he was eating, inquired, with Anglo-Saxon dignity and reserve, "Quack, quack?" To which the Chinaman, shaking his head, answered cheerfully, "Bow-wow."<sup>10</sup>

† E.g., *divine* is from Latin *divus*, which is from *deus*, Greek *theos*, Sanskrit *deva*, meaning god; in the Gypsy tongue the word for god, by a strange plank, becomes *devel*. Historically goes back to the Sanskrit root *vid*, to know; Greek *oida*, Latin *video* (see), French *voir* (see), German *wissen* (know), English *to wit*; plus the suffixes *tor* (as in *author*, *praetor*, *rhetor*), *ic*, *al*, and *ly* (= *like*). Again, the Sanskrit root *ar*, to plough, gives the Latin *arare*, Russian *orati*, English *to ear* the land, *arable*, *art*, *oar*, and perhaps the word *Aryan*—the ploughers.<sup>11</sup>



The languages of nature peoples are not necessarily primitive in any sense of simplicity; many of them are simple in vocabulary and structure, but some of them are as complex and wordy as our own, and more highly organized than Chinese.<sup>7</sup> Nearly all primitive tongues, however, limit themselves to the sensual and particular, and are uniformly poor in general or abstract terms. So the Australian natives had a name for a dog's tail, and another name for a cow's tail; but they had no name for tail in general.<sup>8</sup> The Tasmanians had separate names for specific trees, but no general name for tree; the Choctaw Indians had names for the black oak, the white oak and the red oak, but no name for oak, much less for tree. Doubtless many generations passed before the proper noun ended in the common noun. In many tribes there are no separate words for the color as distinct from the colored object; no words for such abstractions as tone, sex, species, space, spirit, instinct, reason, quantity, hope, fear, matter, consciousness, etc.<sup>9</sup> Such abstract terms seem to grow in a reciprocal relation of cause and effect with the development of thought; they become the tools of subtlety and the symbols of civilization.

Bearing so many gifts to men, words seemed to them a divine boon and a sacred thing, they became the matter of magic formulas, most revered when most meaningless; and they still survive as sacred in mysteries where, e.g., the Word becomes Flesh. They made not only for clearer thinking, but for better social organization; they cemented the generations mentally, by providing a better medium for education and the transmission of knowledge and the arts; they created a new organ of communication, by which one doctrine or belief could mold a people into homogeneous unity. They opened new roads for the transport and traffic of ideas, and immensely accelerated the tempo, and enlarged the range and content, of life. Has any other invention ever equaled, in power and glory, the common noun?

Next to the enlargement of thought the greatest of these gifts of speech was education. Civilization is an accumulation, a treasure-house of arts and wisdom, manners and morals, from which the individual, in his development, draws nourishment for his mental life; without that periodical reacquisition of the racial heritage by each generation, civilization would die a sudden death. It owes its life to education.

Education had few frills among primitive peoples; to them, as to the animals, education was chiefly the transmission of skills and the training of character; it was a wholesome relation of apprentice to master in the ways of life. This direct and practical tutelage encouraged a rapid growth in the

primitive child. In the Omaha tribes the boy of ten had already learned nearly all the arts of his father, and was ready for life; among the Aleuts the boy of ten often set up his own establishment, and sometimes took a wife; in Nigeria children of six or eight would leave the parental house, build a hut, and provide for themselves by hunting and fishing.<sup>10</sup> Usually this educational process came to an end with the beginning of sexual life; the precocious maturity was followed by an early stagnation. The boy, under such conditions, was adult at twelve and old at twenty-five.<sup>11</sup> This does not mean that the "savage" had the mind of a child; it only means that he had neither the needs nor the opportunities of the modern child; he did not enjoy that long and protected adolescence which allows a more nearly complete transmission of the cultural heritage, and a greater variety and flexibility of adaptive reactions to an artificial and unstable environment.

The environment of the natural man was comparatively permanent; it called not for mental agility but for courage and character. The primitive father put his trust in character, as modern education has put its trust in intellect; he was concerned to make not scholars but men. Hence the initiation rites which, among nature peoples, ordinarily marked the arrival of the youth at maturity and membership in the tribe, were designed to test courage rather than knowledge; their function was to prepare the young for the hardships of war and the responsibilities of marriage, while at the same time they indulged the old in the delights of inflicting pain. Some of these initiation tests are "too terrible and too revolting to be seen or told."<sup>12</sup> Among the Kaffirs (to take a mild example) the boys who were candidates for maturity were given arduous work by day, and were prevented from sleeping by night, until they dropped from exhaustion; and to make the matter more certain they were scourged "frequently and mercilessly until blood spurted from them." A considerable proportion of the boys died as a result; but this seems to have been looked upon philosophically by the elders, perhaps as an auxiliary anticipation of natural selection.<sup>13</sup> Usually these initiation ceremonies marked the end of adolescence and the preparation for marriage; and the bride insisted that the bridegroom should prove his capacity for suffering. In many tribes of the Congo the initiation rite centered about circumcision; if the youth winced or cried aloud his relatives were thrashed, and his promised bride, who had watched the ceremony carefully, rejected him scornfully, on the ground that she did not want a girl for her husband.<sup>14</sup>

Little or no use was made of writing in primitive education. Nothing surprises the natural man so much as the ability of Europeans to communicate with one another, over great distances, by making black scratches

upon a piece of paper.<sup>16</sup> Many tribes have learned to write by imitating their civilized exploiters; but some, as in northern Africa, have remained letterless despite five thousand years of intermittent contact with literate nations. Simple tribes living for the most part in comparative isolation, and knowing the happiness of having no history, felt little need for writing. Their memories were all the stronger for having no written aids; they learned and retained, and passed on to their children by recitation, whatever seemed necessary in the way of historical record and cultural transmission. It was probably by committing such oral traditions and folk-lore to writing that literature began. Doubtless the invention of writing was met with a long and holy opposition, as something calculated to undermine morals and the race. An Egyptian legend relates that when the god Thoth revealed his discovery of the art of writing to King Thamos, the good King denounced it as an enemy of civilization. "Children and young people," protested the monarch, "who had hitherto been forced to apply themselves diligently to learn and retain whatever was taught them, would cease to apply themselves, and would neglect to exercise their memories."<sup>17</sup>

Of course we can only guess at the origins of this wonderful toy. Perhaps, as we shall see, it was a by-product of pottery, and began as identifying "trade-marks" on vessels of clay. Probably a system of written signs was made necessary by the increase of trade among the tribes, and its first forms were rough and conventional pictures of commercial objects and accounts. As trade connected tribes of diverse languages, some mutually intelligible mode of record and communication became desirable. Presumably the numerals were among the earliest written symbols, usually taking the form of parallel marks representing the fingers; we still call them fingers when we speak of them as digits. Such words as *five*, the German *fünf* and the Greek *pente* go back to a root meaning hand;<sup>18</sup> so the Roman numerals indicated fingers, "V" represented an expanded hand, and "X" was merely two "V's" connected at their points. Writing was in its beginnings—as it still is in China and Japan—a form of drawing, an art. As men used gestures when they could not use words, so they used pictures to transmit their thoughts across time and space; every word and every letter known to us was once a picture, even as trade-marks and the signs of the zodiac are to this day. The primeval Chinese pictures that preceded writing were called *ku-wan*—literally, "gesture-pictures." Totem poles were pictograph writing; they were, as Mason suggests, tribal

autographs. Some tribes used notched sticks to help the memory or to convey a message; others, like the Algonquin Indians, not only notched the sticks but painted figures upon them, making them into miniature totem poles; or perhaps these poles were notched sticks on a grandiose scale. The Peruvian Indians kept complex records, both of numbers and ideas, by knots and loops made in diversely colored cords; perhaps some light is shed upon the origins of the South American Indians by the fact that a similar custom existed among the natives of the Eastern Archipelago and Polynesia. Lao-tse, calling upon the Chinese to return to the simple life, proposed that they should go back to their primeval use of knotted cords.<sup>18</sup>

More highly developed forms of writing appear sporadically among nature men. Hieroglyphics have been found on Easter Island, in the South Seas; and on one of the Caroline Islands a script has been discovered which consists of fifty-one syllabic signs, picturing figures and ideas.<sup>19</sup> Tradition tells how the priests and chiefs of Easter Island tried to keep to themselves all knowledge of writing, and how the people assembled annually to hear the tablets read; writing was obviously, in its earlier stages, a mysterious and holy thing, a *hieroglyph* or sacred carving. We cannot be sure that these Polynesian scripts were not derived from some of the historic civilizations. In general, writing is a sign of civilization, the least uncertain of the precarious distinctions between civilized and primitive men.

Literature is at first words rather than letters, despite its name; it arises as clerical chants or magic charms, recited usually by the priests, and transmitted orally from memory to memory. *Carmina*, as the Romans named poetry, meant both verses and *charms*; *ode*, among the Greeks, meant originally a magic spell; so did the English *rune* and *lay*, and the German *Lied*. Rhythm and meter, suggested, perhaps, by the rhythms of nature and bodily life, were apparently developed by magicians or *shamans* to preserve, transmit, and enhance the "magic incantations of their verse."<sup>20</sup> The Greeks attributed the first hexameters to the Delphic priests, who were believed to have invented the meter for use in oracles.<sup>21</sup> Gradually, out of these sacerdotal origins, the poet, the orator and the historian were differentiated and secularized: the orator as the official lauder of the king or solicitor of the deity; the historian as the recorder of the royal deeds; the poet as the singer of originally sacred chants, the formulator and preserver of heroic legends, and the musician who put his tales to music for the instruction of populace and kings. So the Fijians, the Tahitians and the New Caledonians had official orators and narrators to make addresses on occasions of

ceremony, and to incite the warriors of the tribe by recounting the deeds of their forefathers and exalting the unequalled glories of the nation's past: how little do some recent historians differ from these! The Somali had professional poets who went from village to village singing songs, like medieval minnesingers and troubadours. Only exceptionally were these poems of love; usually they dealt with physical heroism, or battle, or the relations of parents and children. Here, from the Easter Island tablets, is the lament of a father separated from his daughter by the fortunes of war:

The sail of my daughter,  
Never broken by the force of foreign clans;  
The sail of my daughter,  
Unbroken by the conspiracy of Honiti!  
Ever victorious in all her fights,  
She could not be enticed to drink poisoned waters  
In the obsidian glass.  
Can my sorrow ever be appeased  
While we are divided by the mighty seas?  
O my daughter, O my daughter!  
It is a vast and watery road  
Over which I look toward the horizon,  
My daughter, O my daughter!<sup>m</sup>

## II. SCIENCE

### *Origins—Mathematics—Astronomy—Medicine—Surgery*

In the opinion of Herbert Spencer, that supreme expert in the collection of evidence *post judicium*, science, like letters, began with the priests, originated in astronomic observations, governing religious festivals, and was preserved in the temples and transmitted across the generations as part of the clerical heritage.<sup>m</sup> We cannot say, for here again beginnings elude us, and we may only surmise. Perhaps science, like civilization in general, began with agriculture; geometry, as its name indicates, was the measurement of the soil; and the calculation of crops and seasons, necessitating the observation of the stars and the construction of a calendar, may have generated astronomy. Navigation advanced astronomy, trade developed mathematics, and the industrial arts laid the bases of physics and chemistry.

Counting was probably one of the earliest forms of speech, and in many tribes it still presents a relieving simplicity. The Tasmanians counted up to two: "Parmery, calabawa, cardia"—i.e., "one, two, plenty"; the Guaranis of Brazil ventured further and said: "One, two, three, four, innumerable." The New Hollanders had no words for *three* or *four*; *three* they called "two-one"; *four* was "two-two." Damara natives would not exchange two sheep for four sticks, but willingly exchanged, twice in succession, one sheep for two sticks. Counting was by the fingers; hence the decimal system. When—apparently after some time—the idea of twelve was reached, the number became a favorite because it was so pleasantly divisible by five of the first six digits; and that duodecimal system was born which obstinately survives in English measurements today: twelve months in a year, twelve pence in a shilling, twelve units in a dozen, twelve dozen in a gross, twelve inches in a foot. Thirteen, on the other hand, refused to be divided, and became disreputable and unlucky forever. Toes added to fingers created the idea of twenty or a score; the use of this unit in reckoning lingers in the French *quatre-vingt* (four twenties) for *eighty*." Other parts of the body served as standards of measurement: a hand for a "span," a thumb for an inch (in French the two words are the same), an elbow for a "cubit," an arm for an "ell," a foot for a foot. At an early date pebbles were added to fingers as an aid in counting; the survival of the *abacus*, and of the "little stone" (*calculus*) concealed in the word *calculate*, reveal to us how small, again, is the gap between the simplest and the latest men. Thoreau longed for this primitive simplicity, and well expressed a universally recurrent mood: "An honest man has hardly need to count more than his ten fingers, or, in extreme cases he may add his toes, and lump the rest. I say, let our affairs be as two or three, and not as a hundred or a thousand; instead of a million count half a dozen, and keep your accounts on your thumb-nail."<sup>25</sup>

The measurement of time by the movements of the heavenly bodies was probably the beginning of astronomy; the very word *measure*, like the word *month* (and perhaps the word *man*—the measurer), goes back apparently to a root denoting the moon.<sup>26</sup> Men measured time by moons long before they counted it by years; the sun, like the father, was a comparatively late discovery; even today Easter is reckoned according to the phases of the moon. The Polynesians had a calendar of thirteen months, regulated by the moon; when their lunar year diverged too flagrantly

from the procession of the seasons they dropped a moon, and the balance was restored.<sup>27</sup> But such sane uses of the heavens were exceptional; astrology antedated—and perhaps will survive—astronomy; simple souls are more interested in telling futures than in telling time. A myriad of superstitions grew up anent the influence of the stars upon human character and fate; and many of these superstitions flourish in our own day.\* Perhaps they are not superstitions, but only another kind of error than science.

Natural man formulates no physics, but merely practises it; he cannot plot the path of a projectile, but he can aim an arrow well; he has no chemical symbols, but he knows at a glance which plants are poison and which are food, and uses subtle herbs to heal the ills of the flesh. Perhaps we should employ another gender here, for probably the first doctors were women; not only because they were the natural nurses of the men, nor merely because they made midwifery, rather than venality, the oldest profession, but because their closer connection with the soil gave them a superior knowledge of plants, and enabled them to develop the art of medicine as distinct from the magic-mongering of the priests. From the earliest days to a time yet within our memory, it was the woman who healed. Only when the woman failed did the primitive sick resort to the medicine-man and the *shaman*.<sup>28</sup>

It is astonishing how many cures primitive doctors effected despite their theories of disease.<sup>29</sup> To these simple people disease seemed to be possession of the body by an alien power or spirit—a conception not essentially different from the germ theory which pervades medicine today. The most popular method of cure was by some magic incantation that would propitiate the evil spirit or drive it away. How perennial this form of therapy is may be seen in the story of the Gadarene swine.<sup>30</sup> Even now epilepsy is regarded by many as a possession; some contemporary religions prescribe forms of exorcism for banishing disease, and prayer is recognized by most living people as an aid to pills and drugs. Perhaps the primitive practice was based, as much as the most modern, on the healing power of suggestion. The tricks of these early doctors were more dramatic than those of their more civilized successors: they tried to scare off the possessing demon by assuming terrifying masks, covering themselves with the skins

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\* Extract from an advertisement in the Town Hall (New York) program of March 5, 1934: "HOROSCOPES, by ————, Astrologer to New York's most distinguished social and professional clientele. Ten dollars an hour."

of animals, shouting, raving, slapping their hands, shaking rattles, and sucking the demon out through a hollow tube; as an old adage put it, "Nature cures the disease while the remedy amuses the patient." The Brazilian Bororos carried the science to a higher stage by having the father take the medicine in order to cure the sick child; almost invariably the child got well.<sup>30</sup>

Along with medicative herbs we find in the vast pharmacopœia of primitive man an assortment of soporific drugs calculated to ease pain or to facilitate operations. Poisons like curare (used so frequently on the tips of arrows), and drugs like hemp, opium and eucalyptus are older than history; one of our most popular anesthetics goes back to the Peruvian use of coca for this purpose. Cartier tells how the Iroquois cured scurvy with the bark and leaves of the hemlock spruce.<sup>31</sup> Primitive surgery knew a variety of operations and instruments. Childbirth was well managed; fractures and wounds were ably set and dressed.<sup>32</sup> By means of obsidian knives, or sharpened flints, or fishes' teeth, blood was let, abscesses were drained, and tissues were scarified. Trephining of the skull was practised by primitive medicine-men from the ancient Peruvian Indians to the modern Melanesians; the latter averaged nine successes out of every ten operations, while in 1786 the same operation was invariably fatal at the Hôtel-Dieu in Paris.<sup>33</sup>

We smile at primitive ignorance while we submit anxiously to the expensive therapeutics of our own day. As Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes wrote, after a lifetime of healing:

There is nothing men will not do, there is nothing they have not done, to recover their health and save their lives. They have submitted to be half-drowned in water and half-choked with gases, to be buried up to their chins in earth, to be seared with hot irons like galley-slaves, to be crimped with knives like codfish, to have needles thrust into their flesh, and bonfires kindled on their skin, to swallow all sorts of abominations, and to pay for all this as if to be singed and scalded were a costly privilege, as if blisters were a blessing and leeches a luxury.<sup>34</sup>



## III. ART

*The meaning of beauty—Of art—The primitive sense of beauty—  
The painting of the body—Cosmetics—Tattooing—Scarification — Clothing — Ornaments — Pottery — Painting —  
Sculpture — Architecture — The dance — Music —  
Summary of the primitive preparation for  
civilization*

After fifty thousand years of art men still dispute as to its sources in instinct and in history. What is beauty?—why do we admire it?—why do we endeavor to create it? Since this is no place for psychological discourse we shall answer, briefly and precariously, that beauty is any quality by which an object or a form pleases a beholder. Primarily and originally the object does not please the beholder because it is beautiful, but rather he calls it beautiful because it pleases him. Any object that satisfies desire will seem beautiful: food is beautiful—Thais is not beautiful—to a starving man. The pleasing object may as like as not be the beholder himself; in our secret hearts no other form is quite so fair as ours, and art begins with the adornment of one's own exquisite body. Or the pleasing object may be the desired mate; and then the esthetic—beauty-feeling—sense takes on the intensity and creativeness of sex, and spreads the aura of beauty to everything that concerns the beloved one—to all forms that resemble her, all colors that adorn her, please her or speak of her, all ornaments and garments that become her, all shapes and motions that recall her symmetry and grace. Or the pleasing form may be a desired male; and out of the attraction that here draws frailty to worship strength comes that sense of sublimity—satisfaction in the presence of power—which creates the loftiest art of all. Finally nature herself—with our coöperation—may become both sublime and beautiful; not only because it simulates and suggests all the tenderness of women and all the strength of men, but because we project into it our own feelings and fortunes, our love of others and of ourselves—relishing in it the scenes of our youth, enjoying its quiet solitude as an escape from the storm of life, living with it through its almost human seasons of green youth, hot maturity, “mellow fruitfulness” and cold decay, and recognizing it vaguely as the mother that lent us life and will receive us in our death.

Art is the creation of beauty; it is the expression of thought or feeling in a form that seems beautiful or sublime, and therefore arouses in us some reverberation of that primordial delight which woman gives to man, or man to woman. The thought may be any capture of life's significance, the feeling may be any arousal or release of life's tensions. The form may satisfy us through rhythm, which falls in pleasantly with the alternations of our breath, the pulsation of our blood, and the majestic oscillations of winter and summer, ebb and flow, night and day; or the form may please us through symmetry, which is a static rhythm, standing for strength and recalling to us the ordered proportions of plants and animals, of women and men; or it may please us through color, which brightens the spirit or intensifies life; or finally the form may please us through veracity—because its lucid and transparent imitation of nature or reality catches some mortal loveliness of plant or animal, or some transient meaning of circumstance, and holds it still for our lingering enjoyment or leisurely understanding. From these many sources come those noble superfluities of life—song and dance, music and drama, pottery and painting, sculpture and architecture, literature and philosophy. For what is philosophy but an art—one more attempt to give "significant form" to the chaos of experience?

If the sense of beauty is not strong in primitive society it may be because the lack of delay between sexual desire and fulfilment gives no time for that imaginative enhancement of the object which makes so much of the object's beauty. Primitive man seldom thinks of selecting women because of what we should call their beauty; he thinks rather of their usefulness, and never dreams of rejecting a strong-armed bride because of her ugliness. The Indian chief, being asked which of his wives was loveliest, apologized for never having thought of the matter. "Their faces," he said, with the mature wisdom of a Franklin, "might be more or less handsome, but in other respects women are all the same." Where a sense of beauty is present in primitive man it sometimes eludes us by being so different from our own. "All Negro races that I know," says Reichard, "account a woman beautiful who is not constricted at the waist, and when the body from the arm-pits to the hips is the same breadth—'like a ladder,' says the Coast Negro." Elephantine ears and an overhanging stomach are feminine charms to some African males; and throughout Africa it is the fat woman who is accounted loveliest. In Nigeria, says Mungo Park, "corpulence and beauty seem to be terms nearly synonymous. A woman of even moderate

pretensions must be one who cannot walk without a slave under each arm to support her; and a perfect beauty is a load for a camel." "Most savages," says Briffault, "have a preference for what we should regard as one of the most unsightly features in a woman's form, namely, long, hanging breasts."<sup>85</sup> "It is well known," says Darwin, "that with many Hottentot women the posterior part of the body projects in a wonderful manner . . .; and Sir Andrew Smith is certain that this peculiarity is greatly admired by the men. He once saw a woman who was considered a beauty, and she was so immensely developed behind that when seated on level ground she could not rise, and had to push herself along until she came to a slope. . . . According to Burton the Somali men are said to choose their wives by ranging them in a line, and by picking her out who projects furthest *a tergo*. Nothing can be more hateful to a Negro than the opposite form."<sup>86</sup>

Indeed it is highly probable that the natural male thinks of beauty in terms of himself rather than in terms of woman; art begins at home. Primitive men equaled modern men in vanity, incredible as this will seem to women. Among simple peoples, as among animals, it is the male rather than the female that puts on ornament and mutilates his body for beauty's sake. In Australia, says Bonwick, "adornments are almost entirely monopolized by men"; so too in Melanesia, New Guinea, New Caledonia, New Britain, New Hanover, and among the North American Indians.<sup>87</sup> In some tribes more time is given to the adornment of the body than to any other business of the day.<sup>88</sup> Apparently the first form of art is the artificial coloring of the body—sometimes to attract women, sometimes to frighten foes. The Australian native, like the latest American belle, always carried with him a provision of white, red, and yellow paint for touching up his beauty now and then; and when the supply threatened to run out he undertook expeditions of some distance and danger to renew it. On ordinary days he contented himself with a few spots of color on his cheeks, his shoulders and his breast; but on festive occasions he felt shamefully nude unless his entire body was painted.<sup>89</sup>

In some tribes the men reserved to themselves the right to paint the body; in others the married women were forbidden to paint their necks.<sup>90</sup> But women were not long in acquiring the oldest of the arts—cosmetics. When Captain Cook dallied in New Zealand he noticed that his sailors, when they returned from their adventures on shore, had artificially red or yellow noses; the paint of the native Helens had stuck to them.<sup>91</sup> The

Fellatah ladies of Central Africa spent several hours a day over their toilette: they made their fingers and toes purple by keeping them wrapped all night in henna leaves; they stained their teeth alternately with blue, yellow, and purple dyes; they colored their hair with indigo, and penciled their eyelids with sulphuret of antimony.<sup>44</sup> Every Bongo lady carried in her dressing-case tweezers for pulling out eyelashes and eyebrows, lancet-shaped hair-pins, rings and bells, buttons and clasps.<sup>45</sup>

The primitive soul, like the Periclean Greek, fretted over the transitoriness of painting, and invented tattooing, scarification and clothing as more permanent adornments. The women as well as the men, in many tribes, submitted to the coloring needle, and bore without flinching even the tattooing of their lips. In Greenland the mothers tattooed their daughters early, the sooner to get them married off.<sup>46</sup> Most often, however, tattooing itself was considered insufficiently visible or impressive, and a number of tribes on every continent produced deep scars on their flesh to make themselves lovelier to their fellows, or more discouraging to their enemies. As Théophile Gautier put it, "having no clothes to embroider, they embroidered their skins."<sup>47</sup> Flints or mussel shells cut the flesh, and often a ball of earth was placed within the wound to enlarge the scar. The Torres Straits natives wore huge scars like epaulets; the Abeokuta cut themselves to produce scars imitative of lizards, alligators or tortoises.<sup>48</sup> "There is," says Georg, "no part of the body that has not been perfected, decorated, disfigured, painted, bleached, tattooed, reformed, stretched or squeezed, out of vanity or desire for ornament."<sup>49</sup> The Botocudos derived their name from a plug (*botoque*) which they inserted into the lower lip and the ears in the eighth year of life, and repeatedly replaced with a larger plug until the opening was as much as four inches in diameter.<sup>50</sup> Hottentot women trained the *labia minora* to assume enormous lengths, so producing at last the "Hottentot apron" so greatly admired by their men.<sup>51</sup> Ear-rings and nose-rings were *de rigueur*; the natives of Gippsland believed that one who died without a nose-ring would suffer horrible torments in the next life.<sup>52</sup> It is all very barbarous, says the modern lady, as she bores her ears for rings, paints her lips and her cheeks, tweezes her eyebrows, reforms her eyelashes, powders her face, her neck and her arms, and compresses her feet. The tattooed sailor speaks with superior sympathy of the "savages" he has known; and the Continental student, horrified by primitive mutilations, sports his honorific scars.

Clothing was apparently, in its origins, a form of ornament, a sexual deterrent or charm rather than an article of use against cold or shame.<sup>53</sup>

The Cimbri were in the habit of tobogganing naked over the snow.<sup>72</sup> When Darwin, pitying the nakedness of the Fuegians, gave one of them a red cloth as a protection against the cold, the native tore it into strips, which he and his companions then used as ornaments; as Cook had said of them, timelessly, they were "content to be naked, but ambitious to be fine."<sup>73</sup> In like manner the ladies of the Orinoco cut into shreds the materials given them by the Jesuit Fathers for clothing; they wore the ribbons so made around their necks, but insisted that "they would be ashamed to wear clothing."<sup>74</sup> An old author describes the Brazilian natives as usually naked, and adds: "Now alreadie some doe weare apparell, but esteem it so little that they weare it rather for fashion than for honesties sake, and because they are commanded to weare it; . . . as is well seene by some that sometimes come abroad with certaine garments no further than the navell, without any other thing, or others onely a cap on their heads, and leave the other garments at home."<sup>75</sup> When clothing became something more than an adornment it served partly to indicate the married status of a loyal wife, partly to accentuate the form and beauty of woman. For the most part primitive women asked of clothing precisely what later women have asked—not that it should quite cover their nakedness, but that it should enhance or suggest their charms. Everything changes, except woman and man.

From the beginning both sexes preferred ornaments to clothing. Primitive trade seldom deals in necessities; it is usually confined to articles of adornment or play.<sup>76</sup> Jewelry is one of the most ancient elements of civilization; in tombs twenty thousand years old, shells and teeth have been found strung into necklaces.<sup>77</sup> From simple beginnings such embellishments soon reached impressive proportions, and played a lofty rôle in life. The Galla women wore rings to the weight of six pounds, and some Dinka women carried half a hundredweight of decoration. One African belle wore copper rings which became hot under the sun, so that she had to employ an attendant to shade or fan her. The Queen of the Wabunias on the Congo wore a brass collar weighing twenty pounds; she had to lie down every now and then to rest. Poor women who were so unfortunate as to have only light jewelry imitated carefully the steps of those who carried great burdens of bedizenment.<sup>78</sup>

The first source of art, then, is akin to the display of colors and plumage on the male animal in mating time; it lies in the desire to adorn and beautify

the body. And just as self-love and mate-love, overflowing, pour out their surplus of affection upon nature, so the impulse to beautify passes from the personal to the external world. The soul seeks to express its feeling in objective ways, through color and form; art really begins when men undertake to beautify things. Perhaps its first external medium was pottery. The potter's wheel, like writing and the state, belongs to the historic civilizations; but even without it primitive men—or rather women—lifted this ancient industry to an art, and achieved merely with clay, water and deft fingers an astonishing symmetry of form; witness the pottery fashioned by the Baronga of South Africa,<sup>50</sup> or by the Pueblo Indians.<sup>51</sup>

When the potter applied colored designs to the surface of the vessel he had formed, he was creating the art of painting. In primitive hands painting is not yet an independent art; it exists as an adjunct to pottery and statuary. Nature men made colors out of clay, and the Andamanese made oil colors by mixing ochre with oils or fats.<sup>52</sup> Such colors were used to ornament weapons, implements, vases, clothing, and buildings. Many hunting tribes of Africa and Oceania painted upon the walls of their caves or upon neighboring rocks vivid representations of the animals that they sought in the chase.<sup>53</sup>

Sculpture, like painting, probably owed its origin to pottery: the potter found that he could mold not only articles of use, but imitative figures that might serve as magic amulets, and then as things of beauty, in themselves. The Eskimos carved caribou antlers and walrus ivory into figurines of animals and men.<sup>54</sup> Again, primitive man sought to mark his hut, or a totem-pole, or a grave with some image that would indicate the object worshiped, or the person deceased; at first he carved merely a face upon a post, then a head, then the whole post; and through this filial marking of graves sculpture became an art.<sup>55</sup> So the ancient dwellers on Easter Island topped with enormous monolithic statues the vaults of their dead; scores of such statues, many of them twenty feet high, have been found there; some, now prostrate in ruins, were apparently sixty feet tall.

How did architecture begin? We can hardly apply so magnificent a term to the construction of the primitive hut; for architecture is not mere building, but beautiful building. It began when for the first time a man or a woman thought of a dwelling in terms of appearance as well as of use. Probably this effort to give beauty or sublimity to a structure was directed first to graves rather than to homes; while the commemorative pillar developed into statuary, the tomb grew into a temple. For to primitive thought the dead were more important and powerful than the living; and, besides, the dead could remain settled in one place, while the living wandered too often to warrant their raising permanent homes.

Even in early days, and probably long before he thought of carving objects or building tombs, man found pleasure in rhythm, and began to develop the

crying and warbling, the prancing and preening, of the animal into song and dance. Perhaps, like the animal, he sang before he learned to talk,<sup>65</sup> and danced as early as he sang. Indeed no art so characterized or expressed primitive man as the dance. He developed it from primordial simplicity to a complexity unrivaled in civilization, and varied it into a thousand forms. The great festivals of the tribes were celebrated chiefly with communal and individual dancing; great wars were opened with martial steps and chants; the great ceremonies of religion were a mingling of song, drama and dance. What seems to us now to be forms of play were probably serious matters to early men; they danced not merely to express themselves, but to offer suggestions to nature or the gods; for example, the periodic incitation to abundant reproduction was accomplished chiefly through the hypnotism of the dance. Spencer derived the dance from the ritual of welcoming a victorious chief home from the wars; Freud derived it from the natural expression of sensual desire, and the group technique of erotic stimulation; if one should assert, with similar narrowness, that the dance was born of sacred rites and mummeries, and then merge the three theories into one, there might result as definite a conception of the origin of the dance as can be attained by us today.

From the dance, we may believe, came instrumental music and the drama. The making of such music appears to arise out of a desire to mark and accentuate with sound the rhythm of the dance, and to intensify with shrill or rhythmic notes the excitement necessary to patriotism or procreation. The instruments were limited in range and accomplishment, but almost endless in variety: native ingenuity exhausted itself in fashioning horns, trumpets, gongs, tamtams, clappers, rattles, castanets, flutes and drums from horns, skins, shells, ivory, brass, copper, bamboo and wood; and it ornamented them with elaborate carving and coloring. The taut string of the bow became the origin of a hundred instruments from the primitive lyre to the Stradivarius violin and the modern pianoforte. Professional singers, like professional dancers, arose among the tribes; and vague scales, predominantly minor in tone, were developed.<sup>66</sup>

With music, song and dance combined, the "savage" created for us the drama and the opera. For the primitive dance was frequently devoted to mimicry; it imitated, most simply, the movements of animals and men, and passed to the mimetic performance of actions and events. So some Australian tribes staged a sexual dance around a pit ornamented with shrubbery to represent the vulva, and, after ecstatic and erotic gestures and prancing, cast their spears symbolically into the pit. The northwestern tribes of the same island played a drama of death and resurrection differing only in simplicity from the medieval mystery and modern Passion plays: the dancers slowly sank to the ground, hid their heads under the boughs they carried, and simulated

death; then, at a sign from their leader, they rose abruptly in a wild triumphal chant and dance announcing the resurrection of the soul." In like manner a thousand forms of pantomime described events significant to the history of the tribe, or actions important in the individual life. When rhythm disappeared from these performances the dance passed into the drama, and one of the greatest of art-forms was born.

In these ways precivilized men created the forms and bases of civilization. Looking backward upon this brief survey of primitive culture, we find every element of civilization except writing and the state. All the modes of economic life are invented for us here: hunting and fishing, herding and tillage, transport and building, industry and commerce and finance. All the simpler structures of political life are organized: the clan, the family, the village community, and the tribe; freedom and order—those hostile foci around which civilization revolves—find their first adjustment and reconciliation; law and justice begin. The fundamentals of morals are established: the training of children, the regulation of the sexes, the inculcation of honor and decency, of manners and loyalty. The bases of religion are laid, and its hopes and terrors are applied to the encouragement of morals and the strengthening of the group. Speech is developed into complex languages, medicine and surgery appear, and modest beginnings are made in science, literature and art. All in all it is a picture of astonishing creation, of form rising out of chaos, of one road after another being opened from the animal to the sage. Without these "savages," and their hundred thousand years of experiment and groping, civilization could not have been. We owe almost everything to them—as a fortunate, and possibly degenerate, youth inherits the means to culture, security and ease through the long toil of an unlettered ancestry.



# The Prehistoric Beginnings of Civilization

## I. PALEOLITHIC CULTURE

*The purpose of prehistory—The romances of archeology*

**B**UT we have spoken loosely; these primitive cultures that we have sketched as a means of studying the elements of civilization were not necessarily the ancestors of our own; for all that we know they may be the degenerate remnants of higher cultures that decayed when human leadership moved in the wake of the receding ice from the tropics to the north temperate zone. We have tried to understand how civilization in general arises and takes form; we have still to trace the prehistoric\* origins of our own particular civilization. We wish now to inquire briefly—for this is a field that only borders upon our purpose—by what steps man, before history, prepared for the civilizations of history: how the man of the jungle or the cave became an Egyptian architect, a Babylonian astronomer, a Hebrew prophet, a Persian governor, a Greek poet, a Roman engineer, a Hindu saint, a Japanese artist, and a Chinese sage. We must pass from anthropology through archeology to history.

All over the earth seekers are digging into the earth: some for gold, some for silver, some for iron, some for coal; many of them for knowledge. What strange busyness of men exhuming paleolithic tools from the banks of the Somme, studying with strained necks the vivid paintings on the ceilings of prehistoric caves, unearthing antique skulls at Chou Kou Tien, revealing the buried cities of Mohenjo-daro or Yucatan, carrying débris in basket-caravans out of curse-ridden Egyptian tombs, lifting out of the dust the palaces of Minos and Priam, uncovering the ruins of Persepolis, burrowing into the soil of Africa for some remnant of Carthage, recapturing from the jungle the majestic temples of Angkor! In 1839 Jacques Boucher de Perthes found the first Stone Age flints at Abbeville, in France;

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\* This word will be used as applying to all ages before historical records.

# TYPES AND CULTURES OF PREHISTORIC MAN

Geological Divisions	Anthropological Divisions	Human Types	Discovered	Cultures	Location of Principal Remains	Height Cranial Capacity (c.c.)
Period Epoch	Stage					
Quaternary	Pleistocene ("Most Recent")	1st Interglacial			Chou Kow Tien, China	
		2nd Interglacial			Near Trinil, Java	5' 7"
		3rd Interglacial			Heidelberg, Germany	
		4th Ice-Age			Sussex, England; St.-Acheul, France	
	Postglacial	Paleolithic or Cold (Unpolished) Stone Age	Peking ( <i>Sinanthropus Pekinensis</i> ) 1929 Pithecanthropus 1891 Heidelberg 1907 Pittdown ( <i>Eoanthropus</i> ) 1911	Pre-Chellean Chellean Acheulean Mousterian Aurignacian Solutrean Magdalenian	Chelles (Seine-et-Marne), France St.-Acheul (Somme), France Germany; Le Moustier (Dordogne), France Aurignac (Haute-Garonne), France Solutré (near Mâcon), France La Madeleine (Dordogne), France	1300 1600 1600 5' 3" 5' 3" 6' 0"
Holocene ("Wholly Recent")	Mesolithic (Transitional)	Neolithic or New (Polished) Stone Age	Cro-Magnon 1868	Azilian Kistken-Middletons	Mus-d'Auzil (Ariège), France Denmark, etc.	
				Lake-Dwellers	Robenhansen, etc., Switzerland	
				The First Civilizations	Mesopotamia, Egypt, etc. (Modern European Man)	5' 3" 1450



for nine years the world laughed at him as a dupe. In 1872 Schliemann, with his own money, almost with his own hands, unearthed the youngest of the many cities of Troy; but all the world smiled incredulously. Never has any century been so interested in history as that which followed the voyage of young Champollion with young Napoleon to Egypt (1796); Napoleon returned empty-handed, but Champollion came back with all Egypt, past and current, in his grasp. Every generation since has discovered new civilizations or cultures, and has pushed farther and farther back the frontier of man's knowledge of his development. There are not many things finer in our murderous species than this noble curiosity, this restless and reckless passion to understand.

### *1. Men of the Old Stone Age*

#### *The geological background—Paleolithic types*

Immense volumes have been written to expound our knowledge, and conceal our ignorance, of primitive man. We leave to other imaginative sciences the task of describing the *men* of the Old and the New Stone Age; our concern is to trace the contributions of these "paleolithic" and "neolithic" cultures to our contemporary life.

The picture we must form as background to the story is of an earth considerably different from that which tolerates us transiently today: an earth presumably shivering with the intermittent glaciations that made our now temperate zones arctic for thousands of years, and piled up masses of rock like the Himalayas, the Alps and the Pyrenees before the plough of the advancing ice.\* If we accept the precarious theories of contemporary science, the creature who became man by learning to speak was one of the adaptable species that survived from those frozen centuries. In the Interglacial Stages, while the ice was retreating (and, for all we know, long before that), this strange organism discovered fire, developed the art of fashioning stone and bone into weapons and tools, and thereby paved the way to civilization.

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\* Current geological theory places the First Ice Age about 500,000 B.C.; the First Interglacial Stage about 475,000 to 400,000 B.C.; the Second Ice Age about 400,000 B.C.; the Second Interglacial Stage about 375,000 to 175,000 B.C.; the Third Ice Age about 175,000 B.C.; the Third Interglacial Stage about 150,000 to 50,000 B.C.; the Fourth (and latest) Ice Age about 50,000 to 25,000 B.C.<sup>2</sup> We are now in the Postglacial Stage, whose date of termination has not been accurately calculated. These and other details have been arranged more visibly in the table at the head of this chapter.

Various remains have been found which—subject to later correction—are attributed to this prehistoric man. In 1929 a young Chinese palcontologist, W. C. Pei, discovered in a cave at Chou Kou Tien, some thirty-seven miles from Peiping, a skull adjudged to be human by such experts as the Abbé Breuil and G. Elliot Smith. Near the skull were traces of fire, and stones obviously worked into tools; but mingled with these signs of human agency were the bones of animals ascribed by common consent to the Early Pleistocene Epoch, a million years ago.<sup>7</sup> This Peking skull is by common opinion the oldest human fossil known to us; and the tools found with it are the first human artefacts in history. At Piltdown, in Sussex, England, Dawson and Woodward found in 1911 some possibly human fragments now known as “Piltdown Man,” or *Eoanthropus* (Dawn Man); the dates assigned to it range spaciouly from 1,000,000 to 125,000 B.C. Similar uncertainties attach to the skull and thigh-bones found in Java in 1891, and the jaw-bone found near Heidelberg in 1907. The earliest unmistakably human fossils were discovered at Neanderthal, near Dusseldorf, Germany, in 1857; they date apparently from 40,000 B.C., and so resemble human remains unearthed in Belgium, France and Spain, and even on the shores of the Sea of Galilee, that a whole race of “Neanderthal Men” has been pictured as possessing Europe some forty millenniums before our era. They were short, but they had a cranial capacity of 1600 cubic centimeters—which is 200 more than ours.<sup>8</sup>

These ancient inhabitants of Europe seem to have been displaced, some 20,000 B.C., by a new race, named Cro-Magnon, from the discovery of its relics (1868) in a grotto of that name in the Dordogne region of southern France. Abundant remains of like type and age have been exhumed at various points in France, Switzerland, Germany and Wales. They indicate a people of magnificent vigor and stature, ranging from five feet ten inches to six feet four inches in height, and having a skull capacity of 1590 to 1715 cubic centimeters.<sup>9</sup> Like the Neanderthals, Cro-Magnon men are known to us as “cave-men,” because their remains are found in caves; but there is no proof that these were their sole dwelling-place, it may be again but a jest of time that only those of them who lived in caves, or died in them, have transmitted their bones to archeologists. According to present theory this splendid race came from central Asia through Africa into Europe by land-bridges presumed to have then connected Africa with Italy and Spain.<sup>10</sup> The distribution of their fossils suggests that they fought for many decades, perhaps centuries, a war with the Neanderthals for the possession of Europe; so old is the conflict between Germany and France. At all events, Neanderthal Man disappeared; Cro-Magnon Man survived, became the chief progenitor of the modern western European, and laid the bases of that civilization which we inherit today.

The cultural remains of these and other European types of the Old Stone Age have been classified into seven main groups, according to the location of the earliest or principal finds in France. All are characterized by the use of unpolished stone implements. The first three took form in the precarious interval between the third and fourth glaciations.

I. The *Pre-Chellean Culture* or Industry, dating some 125,000 B.C.: most of the flints found in this low layer give little evidence of fashioning, and appear to have been used (if at all) as nature provided them; but the presence of many stones of a shape to fit the fist, and in some degree flaked and pointed, gives to Pre-Chellean man the presumptive honor of having made the first known tool of European man—the *coup-de-pomg*, or “blow-of-the-fist” stone.

II. The *Chellean Culture*, ca. 100,000 B.C., improved this tool by roughly flaking it on both sides, pointing it into the shape of an almond, and fitting it better to the hand.

III. The *Acheulean Culture*, about 75,000 B.C., left an abundance of remains in Europe, Greenland, the United States, Canada, Mexico, Africa, the Near East, India, and China; it not only brought the *coup-de-pomg* to greater symmetry and point, but it produced a vast variety of special tools—hammers, anvils, scrapers, planes, arrow-heads, spear-heads, and knives; already one sees a picture of busy human industry.

IV. The *Mousterian Culture* is found on all continents, in especial association with the remains of Neanderthal Man, about 40,000 B.C. Among these flints the *coup-de-poing* is comparatively rare, as something already ancient and superseded. The implements were formed from a large single flake, lighter, sharper and shapelier than before, and by skilful hands with a long-established tradition of artisanship. Higher in the Pleistocene strata of southern France appear the remains of

V. The *Aurignacian Culture*, ca. 25,000 B.C., the first of the postglacial industries, and the first known culture of Cro-Magnon Man. Bone tools—pins, anvils, polishers, etc.—were now added to those of stone; and art appeared in the form of crude engravings on the rocks, or simple figurines in high relief, mostly of nude women. At a higher stage of Cro-Magnon development

VI. The *Solutrean Culture* appears ca. 20,000 B.C., in France, Spain, Czechoslovakia and Poland. points, planes, drills, saws, javelins and spears were added to the tools and weapons of Aurignacian days; slim, sharp needles were made of bone, many implements were carved out of reindeer horn, and the reindeer's antlers were engraved occasionally with animal figures appreciably superior to Aurignacian art. Finally, at the peak of Cro-Magnon growth,

VII. The *Magdalenian Culture* appears throughout Europe about 16,000 B.C.; in industry it was characterized by a large assortment of delicate utensils in ivory, bone and horn, culminating in humble but perfect needles and pins; in art it was the age of the Altamira drawings, the most perfect and subtle accomplishment of Cro-Magnon Man.

Through these cultures of the Old Stone Age prehistoric man laid the bases of those handicrafts which were to remain part of the European heritage until the Industrial Revolution. Their transmission to the classic and modern civilizations was made easier by the wide spread of paleolithic industries. The skull and cave-painting found in Rhodesia in 1921, the flints discovered in Egypt by De Morgan in 1896, the paleolithic finds of Scton-Karr in Somaliland, the Old Stone Age deposits in the basin of the Fayum,\* and the Still Bay Culture of South Africa indicate that the Dark Continent went through approximately the same prehistoric periods of development in the art of flaking stone as those which we have outlined in Europe," perhaps, indeed, the quasi-Aurignacian remains in Tunis and Algiers strengthen the hypothesis of an African origin or stopping-point for the Cro-Magnon race, and therefore for European man.<sup>9</sup> Paleolithic implements have been dug up in Syria, India, China, Siberia, and other sections of Asia,<sup>10</sup> Andrews and his Jesuit predecessors came upon them in Mongolia;<sup>11</sup> Neanderthal skeletons and Mousterian-Aurignacian flints have been exhumed in great abundance in Palestine; and we have seen how the oldest known human remains and implements have lately been unearthed near Peiping. Bone tools have been discovered in Nebraska which some patriotic authorities would place at 500,000 B.C.; arrowheads have been found in Oklahoma and New Mexico which their finders assure us were made in 350,000 B.C. So vast was the bridge by which prehistoric transmitted the foundations of civilization to historic man.

\* An oasis west of the Middle Nile.

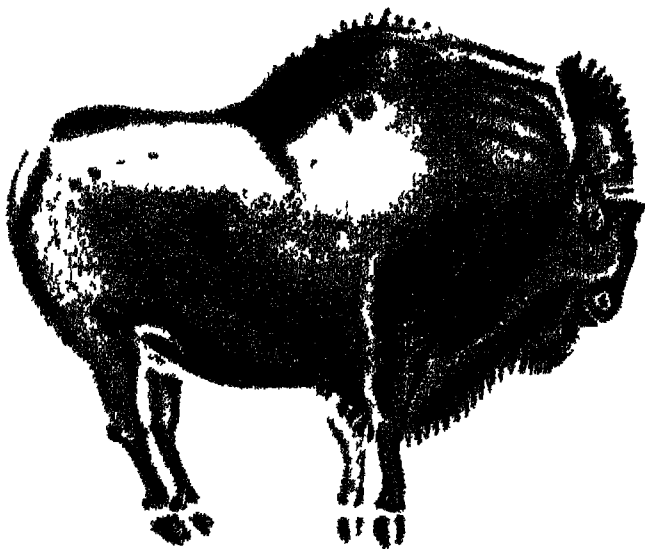


FIG. 2—*Bison painted in paleolithic cave at Altamira, Spain*  
Photo by American Museum of Natural History



FIG. 3—*Hypothetical reconstruction of a neolithic lake dwelling*  
American Museum of Natural History



ENGLISH	EGYPTIAN HIEROGLYPH	ABU-SIMBEL	MOABITE STONE	IONIAN GREEK
A				
B				
G				
D				
E				
F(W)				
Z				
H				
TH				
I				
K				
L				
M				
N				
X(SH)				
O				
P				
S				
Q				
R				
S				
T				
Ü				
P-H				
KH				
PS				
Ö				

FIG. 4—Development of the alphabet

## 2. *Arts of the Old Stone Age*

### *Tools—Fire—Painting—Sculpture*

If now we sum up the implements fashioned by paleolithic man we shall gain a clearer idea of his life than by giving loose rein to our fancy. It was natural that a stone in the fist should be the first tool; many an animal could have taught that to man. So the *coup-de-poing*—a rock sharp at one end, round at the other to fit the palm of the hand—became for primeval man hammer, axe, chisel, scraper, knife and saw; even to this day the word *hammer* means, etymologically, a stone.<sup>13</sup> Gradually these specific tools were differentiated out of the one homogeneous form: holes were bored to attach a handle, teeth were inserted to make a saw, branches were tipped with the *coup-de-poing* to make a pick, an arrow or a spear. The scraper-stone that had the shape of a shell became a shovel or a hoe; the rough-surfaced stone became a file; the stone in a sling became a weapon of war that would survive even classical antiquity. Given bone, wood and ivory as well as stone, and paleolithic man made himself a varied assortment of weapons and tools: polishers, mortars, axes, planes, scrapers, drills, lamps, knives, chisels, choppers, lances, anvils, etchers, daggers, fish-hooks, harpoons, wedges, awls, pins, and doubtless many more.<sup>14</sup> Every day he stumbled upon new knowledge, and sometimes he had the wit to develop his chance discoveries into purposeful inventions.

But his great achievement was fire. Darwin has pointed out how the hot lava of volcanoes might have taught men the art of fire; according to Æschylus, Prometheus established it by igniting a narthex stalk in the burning crater of a volcano on the isle of Lemnos.<sup>15</sup> Among Neanderthal remains we find bits of charcoal and charred bones; man-made fire, then, is at least 40,000 years old.<sup>16</sup> Cro-Magnon man ground stone bowls to hold the grease that he burned to give him light: the lamp, therefore, is also of considerable age. Presumably it was fire that enabled man to meet the threat of cold from the advancing ice; fire that left him free to sleep on the earth at night, since animals dreaded the marvel as much as primitive men worshiped it; fire that conquered the dark and began that lessening of fear which is one of the golden threads in the not quite golden web of history; fire that created the old and honorable art of cooking, extending the diet of man to a thousand foods inedible before; fire that led at last

to the fusing of metals, and the only real advance in technology from Cro-Magnon days to the Industrial Revolution.<sup>27</sup>

Strange to relate—and as if to illustrate Gautier's lines on robust art outlasting emperors and states—our clearest relics of palcolithic man are fragments of his art. Sixty years ago Señor Marcelino de Sautuola came upon a large cave on his estate at Altamira, in northern Spain. For thousands of years the entrance had been hermetically sealed by fallen rocks naturally cemented with stalagmite deposits. Blasts for new construction accidentally opened the entrance. Three years later Sautuola explored the cave, and noticed some curious markings on the walls. One day his little daughter accompanied him. Not compelled, like her father, to stoop as she walked through the cave, she could look up and observe the ceiling. There she saw, in vague outline, the painting of a great bison, magnificently colored and drawn. Many other drawings were found on closer examination of the ceiling and the walls. When, in 1880, Sautuola published his report on these observations, archeologists greeted him with genial scepticism. Some did him the honor of going to inspect the drawings, only to pronounce them the forgery of a hoaxer. For thirty years this quite reasonable incredulity persisted. Then the discovery of other drawings in caves generally conceded to be prehistoric (from their contents of unpolished flint tools, and polished ivory and bone) confirmed Sautuola's judgment; but Sautuola now was dead. Geologists came to Altamira and testified, with the unanimity of hindsight, that the stalagmite coating on many of the drawings was a paleolithic deposit.<sup>28</sup> General opinion now places these Altamira drawings—and the greater portion of extant prehistoric art—in the Magdalenian culture, some 16,000 B.C.<sup>29</sup> Paintings slightly later in time, but still of the Old Stone Age, have been found in many caves of France.\*

Most often the subjects of these drawings are animals—reindeers, mammoths, horses, boars, bears, etc.; these, presumably, were dietetic luxuries, and therefore favorite objects of the chase. Sometimes the animals are transfixed with arrows; these, in the view of Frazer and Reinach, were intended as magic images that would bring the animal under the power, and into the stomach, of the artist or the hunter.<sup>30</sup> Conceivably they were just plain art, drawn with the pure joy of esthetic creation; the crudest

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\* Combarelles, Les Eyzies, Font de Gaume, etc.

representation should have sufficed the purposes of magic, whereas these paintings are often of such delicacy, power and skill as to suggest the unhappy thought that art, in this field at least, has not advanced much in the long course of human history. Here is life, action, nobility, conveyed overwhelmingly with one brave line or two; here a single stroke (or is it that the others have faded?) creates a living, charging beast. Will Leonardo's *Last Supper*, or El Greco's *Assumption*, bear up as well as these Cro-Magnon paintings after twenty thousand years?

Painting is a sophisticated art, presuming many centuries of mental and technical development. If we may accept current theory (which it is always a perilous thing to do), painting developed from statuary, by a passage from carving in the round to bas-relief and thence to mere outline and coloring; painting is sculpture minus a dimension. The intermediate prehistoric art is well represented by an astonishingly vivid bas-relief of an archer (or a spearman) on the Aurignacian cliffs at Laussel in France.<sup>22</sup> In a cave in Ariège, France, Louis Begouen discovered, among other Magdalenian relics, several ornamental handles carved out of reindeer antlers; one of these is of mature and excellent workmanship, as if the art had already generations of tradition and development behind it. Throughout the prehistoric Mediterranean—Egypt, Crete, Italy, France and Spain—countless figures of fat little women are found, which indicate either a worship of motherhood or an African conception of beauty. Stone statues of a wild horse, a reindeer and a mammoth have been unearthed in Czechoslovakia, among remains uncertainly ascribed to 30,000 B.C.<sup>23</sup>

The whole interpretation of history as progress falters when we consider that these statues, bas-reliefs and paintings, numerous though they are, may be but an infinitesimal fraction of the art that expressed or adorned the life of primeval man. What remains is found in caves, where the elements were in some measure kept at bay; it does not follow that prehistoric men were artists only when they were in caves. They may have carved as sedulously and ubiquitously as the Japanese, and may have fashioned statuary as abundantly as the Greeks; they may have painted not only the rocks in their caverns, but textiles, wood, everything—not excepting themselves. They may have created masterpieces far superior to the fragments that survive. In one grotto a tube was discovered, made from the bones of a reindeer, and filled with pigment;<sup>24</sup> in another a stone palette

was picked up still thick with red ochre paint despite the transit of two hundred centuries.<sup>21</sup> Apparently the arts were highly developed and widely practised eighteen thousand years ago. Perhaps there was a class of professional artists among paleolithic men; perhaps there were Bohemians starving in the less respectable caves, denouncing the commercial bourgeoisie, plotting the death of academies, and forging antiques.

## II. NEOLITHIC CULTURE

*The Kitchen-Middens — The Lake-Dwellers — The coming of agriculture — The taming of animals — Technology — Neolithic weaving — pottery — building — transport — religion — science — Summary of the prehistoric preparation for civilization*

At various times in the last one hundred years great heaps of seemingly prehistoric refuse have been found, in France, Sardinia, Portugal, Brazil, Japan and Manchuria, but above all in Denmark, where they received that queer name of Kitchen-Middens (*Kjokken-møddinger*) by which such ancient messes are now generally known. These rubbish heaps are composed of shells, especially of oysters, mussels and periwinkles; of the bones of various land and marine animals; of tools and weapons of horn, bone and unpolished stone; and of mineral remains like charcoal, ashes and broken pottery. These unprepossessing relics are apparently signs of a culture formed about the eighth millennium before Christ—later than the true paleolithic, and yet not properly neolithic, because not yet arrived at the use of polished stone. We know hardly anything of the men who left these remains, except that they had a certain catholic taste. Along with the slightly older culture of the Mas-d'Azil, in France, the Middens represent a "mesolithic" (middle-stone) or transition period between the paleolithic and the neolithic age.

In the year 1854, the winter being unusually dry, the level of the Swiss lakes sank, and revealed another epoch in prehistory. At some two hundred localities on these lakes piles were found which had stood in place under the water for from thirty to seventy centuries. The piles were so arranged as to indicate that small villages had been built upon them, perhaps for isolation or defense; each was connected with the land only by a narrow bridge, whose foundations, in some cases, were still in place; here and there even the framework of the houses had survived the patient play

of the waters.<sup>4</sup> Amid these ruins were tools of bone and *polished* stone which became for archeologists the distinguishing mark of the New Stone Age that flourished some 10,000 B.C. in Asia, and some 5000 B.C. in Europe.<sup>28</sup> Akin to these remains are the gigantic tumuli left in the valleys of the Mississippi and its tributaries by the strange race that we call the Mound-Builders, and of which we know nothing except that in these mounds, shaped in the form of altars, geometric figures, or totem animals, are found objects of stone, shell, bone and beaten metal which place these mysterious men at the end of the neolithic period.

If from such remains we attempt to patch together some picture of the New Stone Age, we find at once a startling innovation—agriculture. In one sense all human history hinges upon two revolutions: the neolithic passage from hunting to agriculture, and the modern passage from agriculture to industry; no other revolutions have been quite as real or basic as these. The remains show that the Lake-Dwellers ate wheat, millet, rye, barley and oats, besides one hundred and twenty kinds of fruit and many varieties of nut.<sup>29</sup> No ploughs have been found in these ruins, probably because the first ploughshares were of wood—some strong tree-trunk and branch fitted with a flint edge; but a neolithic rock-carving unmistakably shows a peasant guiding a plough drawn by two oxen.<sup>30</sup> This marks the appearance of one of the epochal inventions of history. Before agriculture the earth could have supported (in the rash estimate of Sir Arthur Keith) only some twenty million men, and the lives of these were shortened by the mortality of the chase and war;<sup>31</sup> now began that multiplication of mankind which definitely confirmed man's mastery of the planet.

Meanwhile the men of the New Stone Age were establishing another of the foundations of civilization: the domestication and breeding of animals. Doubtless this was a long process, probably antedating the neolithic period. A certain natural sociability may have contributed to the association of man and animal, as we may still see in the delight that primitive people take in taming wild beasts, and in filling their huts with monkeys, parrots and similar companions.<sup>32</sup> The oldest bones in the neolithic remains

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\* Remains of similar lake dwellings have been found in France, Italy, Scotland, Russia, North America, India, and elsewhere. Such villages still exist in Borneo, Sumatra, New Guinea, etc.<sup>33</sup> Venezuela owes its name (Little Venice) to the fact that when Alonso de Ojeda discovered it for Europe (1499) he found the natives living in pile-dwellings on Lake Maracaibo.<sup>34</sup>

(ca. 8000 B.C.) are those of the dog—the most ancient and honorable companion of the human race. A little later (ca. 6000 B.C.) came the goat, the sheep, the pig and the ox.<sup>34</sup> Finally the horse, which to paleolithic man had been, if we may judge from the cave drawings, merely a beast of prey, was taken into camp, tamed, and turned into a beloved slave;<sup>35</sup> in a hundred ways he was now put to work to increase the leisure, the wealth, and the power of man. The new lord of the earth began to replenish his food-supply by breeding as well as hunting; and perhaps he learned, in this same neolithic age, to use cow's milk as food.

Neolithic inventors slowly improved and extended the tool-chest and armory of man. Here among the remains are pulleys, levers, grindstones, awls, pincers, axes, hoes, ladders, chisels, spindles, looms, sickles, saws, fish-hooks, skates, needles, brooches and pins.<sup>36</sup> Here, above all, is the wheel, another fundamental invention of mankind, one of the modest essentials of industry and civilization; already in this New Stone Age it was developed into disc and spoked varieties. Stones of every sort—even obdurate diorite and obsidian—were ground, bored, and finished into a polished form. Flints were mined on a large scale. In the ruins of a neolithic mine at Brandon, England, eight worn picks of deerhorn were found, on whose dusty surfaces were the finger-prints of the workmen who had laid down those tools ten thousand years ago. In Belgium the skeleton of such a New Stone Age miner, who had been crushed by falling rock, was discovered with his deerhorn pick still clasped in his hands;<sup>37</sup> across a hundred centuries we feel him as one of us, and share in weak imagination his terror and agony. Through how many bitter millenniums men have been tearing out of the bowels of the earth the mineral bases of civilization!

Having made needles and pins man began to weave; or, beginning to weave, he was moved to make needles and pins. No longer content to clothe himself with the furs and hides of beasts, he wove the wool of his sheep and the fibres found in the plants into garments from which came the robe of the Hindu, the toga of the Greek, the skirt of the Egyptian, and all the fascinating gamut of human dress. Dyes were mixed from the juices of plants or the minerals of the earth, and garments were stained with colors into luxuries for kings. At first men seem to have plaited textiles as they plaited straw, by interlacing one fibre with another; then they pierced holes into animal skins, and bound the skins with coarse fibres passing through the holes, as with the corsets of yesterday and the shoes of today; gradually the fibres

were refined into thread, and sewing became one of the major arts of woman-kind. The stone distaffs and spindles among the neolithic ruins reveal one of the great origins of human industry. Even mirrors are found in these remains;<sup>7</sup> everything was ready for civilization.

No pottery has been discovered in the earlier paleolithic graves; fragments of it appear in the remains of the Magdalenian culture in Belgium,<sup>8</sup> but it is only in the mesolithic Age of the Kitchen-Middens that we find any developed use of earthenware. The origin of the art, of course, is unknown. Perhaps some observant primitive noticed that the trough made by his foot in clay held water with little seepage;<sup>9</sup> perhaps some accidental baking of a piece of wet clay by an adjoining fire gave him the hint that fertilized invention, and revealed to him the possibilities of a material so abounding in quantity, so pliable to the hand, and so easy to harden with fire or the sun. Doubtless he had for thousands of years carried his food and drink in such natural containers as gourds and coconuts and the shells of the sea; then he had made himself cups and ladles of wood or stone, and baskets and hampers of rushes or straw; now he made lasting vessels of baked clay, and created another of the major industries of mankind. So far as the remains indicate, neolithic man did not know the potter's wheel; but with his own hands he fashioned clay into forms of beauty as well as use, decorated it with simple designs,<sup>10</sup> and made pottery, almost at the outset, not only an industry but an art.

Here, too, we find the first evidences of another major industry—building. Paleolithic man left no known trace of any other home than the cave. But in the neolithic remains we find such building devices as the ladder, the pulley, the lever, and the hinge.<sup>11</sup> The Lake-Dwellers were skilful carpenters, fastening beam to pile with sturdy wooden pins, or mortising them head to head, or strengthening them with crossbeams notched into their sides. The floors were of clay, the walls of wattle-work coated with clay, the roofs of bark, straw, rushes or reeds. With the aid of the pulley and the wheel, building materials were carried from place to place, and great stone foundations were laid for villages. Transport, too, became an industry: canoes were built, and must have made the lakes live with traffic; trade was carried on over mountains and between distant continents.<sup>12</sup> Amber, diorite, jadeite and obsidian were imported into Europe from afar.<sup>13</sup> Similar words, letters, myths, pottery and designs betray the cultural contacts of diverse groups of prehistoric men.<sup>14</sup>

Outside of pottery the New Stone Age has left us no art, nothing to compare with the painting and statuary of paleolithic man. Here and there among the scenes of neolithic life from England to China we find circular heaps of stone called dolmens, upright monoliths called menhirs, and gigantic



cromlechs—stone structures of unknown purpose—like those at Stonehenge or in Morbihan. Probably we shall never know the meaning or function of these megaliths; presumably they are the remains of altars and temples.<sup>45</sup> For neolithic man doubtless had religions, myths with which to dramatize the daily tragedy and victory of the sun, the death and resurrection of the soil, and the strange earthly influences of the moon; we cannot understand the historic faiths unless we postulate such prehistoric origins.<sup>46</sup> Perhaps the arrangement of the stones was determined by astronomic considerations, and suggests, as Schneider thinks, an acquaintance with the calendar.<sup>47</sup> Some scientific knowledge was present, for certain neolithic skulls give evidence of trephining; and a few skeletons reveal limbs apparently broken and reset.<sup>48</sup>

We cannot properly estimate the achievements of prehistoric men, for we must guard against describing their life with imagination that transcends the evidence, while on the other hand we suspect that time has destroyed remains that would have narrowed the gap between primeval and modern man. Even so, the surviving record of Stone Age advances is impressive enough: paleolithic tools, fire, and art; neolithic agriculture, animal breeding, weaving, pottery, building, transport, and medicine, and the definite domination and wider peopling of the earth by the human race. All the bases had been laid; everything had been prepared for the historic civilizations except (*perhaps*) metals, writing and the state. Let men find a way to record their thoughts and achievements, and thereby transmit them more securely across the generations, and civilization would begin.

### III. THE TRANSITION TO HISTORY

#### 1. *The Coming of Metals*

##### *Copper — Bronze — Iron*

When did the use of metals come to man, and how? Again we do not know; we merely surmise that it came by accident, and we presume, from the absence of earlier remains, that it began towards the end of the Neolithic Age. Dating this end about 4000 B.C., we have a perspective in which the Age of Metals (and of writing and civilization) is a mere six thousand years appended to an Age of Stone lasting at least forty thousand years, and an Age of Man lasting\* a million years. So young is the subject of our history.

The oldest known metal to be adapted to human use was copper. We find it in a Lake-Dwelling at Robenhausen, Switzerland, ca. 6000 B.C.;<sup>49</sup> in pre-

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\* If we accept "Peking Man" as early Pleistocene.

historic Mesopotamia ca. 4500 B.C.; in the Badarian graves of Egypt towards 4000 B.C.; in the ruins of Ur ca. 3100 B.C.; and in the relics of the North American Mound-Builders at an unknown age.<sup>50</sup> The Age of Metals began not with their discovery, but with their transformation to human purpose by fire and working. Metallurgists believe that the first fusing of copper out of its stony ore came by haphazard when a primeval camp fire melted the copper lurking in the rocks that enclosed the flames; such an event has often been seen at primitive camp fires in our own day. *Possibly* this was the hint which, many times repeated, led early man, so long content with refractory stone, to seek in this malleable metal a substance more easily fashioned into durable weapons and tools.<sup>51</sup> Presumably the metal was first used as it came from the profuse but careless hand of nature—sometimes nearly pure, most often grossly alloyed. Much later, doubtless—apparently about 3500 B.C. in the region around the Eastern Mediterranean—men discovered the art of smelting, of extracting metals from their ores. Then, towards 1500 B.C. (as we may judge from bas-reliefs on the tomb of Rekh-mara in Egypt), they proceeded to cast metal: dropping the molten copper into a clay or sand receptacle, they let it cool into some desired form like a spear-head or an axe.<sup>52</sup> That process, once discovered, was applied to a great variety of metals, and provided man with those doughty elements that were to build his greatest industries, and give him his conquest of the earth, the sea, and the air. Perhaps it was because the Eastern Mediterranean lands were rich in copper that vigorous new cultures arose, in the fourth millennium B.C., in Elam, Mesopotamia and Egypt, and spread thence in all directions to transform the world.<sup>53</sup>

But copper by itself was soft, admirably pliable for some purposes (what would our electrified age do without it?), but too weak for the heavier tasks of peace and war; an alloy was needed to harden it. Though nature suggested many, and often gave man copper already mixed and hardened with tin or zinc—forming, therefore, ready-made bronze or brass—he may have dallied for centuries before taking the next step: the deliberate fusing of metal with metal to make compounds more suited to his needs. The discovery is at least five thousand years old, for bronze is found in Cretan remains of 3000 B.C., in Egyptian remains of 2800 B.C., and in the second city of Troy 2000 B.C.<sup>54</sup> We can no longer speak strictly of an "Age of Bronze," for the metal came to different peoples at diverse epochs, and the term would therefore be without chronological meaning;<sup>55</sup> furthermore, some cultures—like those of Finland, northern Russia, Polynesia, central Africa, southern India, North America, Australia and Japan—passed over the Bronze Age directly from stone to iron;<sup>56</sup> and in those cultures where bronze appears it seems to have had a subordinate place as a luxury of priests, aristocrats and

kings, while commoners had still to be content with stone." Even the terms "Old Stone Age" and "New Stone Age" are precariously relative, and describe conditions rather than times; to this day many primitive peoples (e.g., the Eskimos and the Polynesian Islanders) remain in the Age of Stone, knowing iron only as a delicacy brought to them by explorers. Captain Cook bought several pigs for a sixpenny nail when he landed in New Zealand in 1778; and another traveler described the inhabitants of Dog Island as "covetous chiefly of iron, so as to want to take the nails out of the ship."<sup>88</sup>

Bronze is strong and durable, but the copper and tin which were needed to make it were not available in such convenient quantities and locations as to provide man with the best material for industry and war. Sooner or later iron had to come; and it is one of the anomalies of history that, being so abundant, it did not appear at least as early as copper and bronze. Men may have begun the art by making weapons out of meteoric iron as the Mound-Builders seem to have done, and as some primitive peoples do to this day; then, perhaps, they melted it from the ore by fire, and hammered it into wrought iron. Fragments of apparently meteoric iron have been found in predynastic Egyptian tombs; and Babylonian inscriptions mention iron as a costly rarity in Hammurabi's capital (2100 B.C.). An iron foundry perhaps four thousand years old has been discovered in Northern Rhodesia; mining in South Africa is no modern invention. The oldest *wrought* iron known is a group of knives found at Gerar, in Palestine, and dated by Petrie about 1350 B.C. A century later the metal appears in Egypt, in the reign of the great Rameses II; still another century and it is found in the Ægean. In Western Europe it turns up first at Hallstatt, Austria, ca. 900 B.C., and in the La Tène industry in Switzerland ca. 500 B.C. It entered India with Alexander, America with Columbus, Oceania with Cook.<sup>89</sup> In this leisurely way, century by century, iron has gone about its rough conquest of the earth.

## 2. Writing

### *Its possible ceramic origins — The "Mediterranean Signary" — Hieroglyphics — Alphabets*

But by far the most important step in the passage to civilization was writing. Bits of pottery from neolithic remains show, in some cases, painted lines which several students have interpreted as signs.<sup>90</sup> This is doubtful enough; but it is possible that writing, in the broad sense of graphic symbols of specific thoughts, began with marks impressed by nails or fingers upon the still soft clay to adorn or identify pottery. In the earliest Sumerian hieroglyphics the pictograph for bird bears a suggestive resemblance

to the bird decorations on the oldest pottery at Susa, in Elam; and the earliest pictograph for grain is taken directly from the geometrical grain-decoration of Susan and Sumerian vases. The linear script of Sumeria, on its first appearance (ca. 3600 B.C.), is apparently an abbreviated form of the signs and pictures painted or impressed upon the primitive pottery of lower Mesopotamia and Elam.<sup>81</sup> Writing, like painting and sculpture, is probably in its origin a ceramic art; it began as a form of etching and drawing, and the same clay that gave vases to the potter, figures to the sculptor and bricks to the builder, supplied writing materials to the scribe. From such a beginning to the cuneiform writing of Mesopotamia would be an intelligible and logical development.

The oldest graphic symbols known to us are those found by Flinders Petrie on shards, vases and stones discovered in the prehistoric tombs of Egypt, Spain and the Near East, to which, with his usual generosity, he attributes an age of seven thousand years. This "Mediterranean Signary" numbered some three hundred signs; most of them were the same in all localities, indicating commercial bonds from one end of the Mediterranean to the other as far back as 5000 B.C. They were not pictures but chiefly mercantile symbols—marks of property, quantity, or other business memoranda; the berated bourgeoisie may take consolation in the thought that literature originated in bills of lading. The signs were not letters, since they represented entire words or ideas; but many of them were astonishingly like letters of the "Phœnician" alphabet. Petrie concludes that "a wide body of signs had been gradually brought into use in primitive times for various purposes. These were interchanged by trade, and spread from land to land, . . . until a couple of dozen signs triumphed and became common property to a group of trading communities, while the local survivals of other forms were gradually extinguished in isolated seclusion."<sup>82</sup> That this signary was the source of the alphabet is an interesting theory, which Professor Petrie has the distinction of holding alone.<sup>83</sup>

Whatever may have been the development of these early commercial symbols, there grew up alongside them a form of writing which was a branch of drawing and painting, and conveyed connected thought by pictures. Rocks near Lake Superior still bear remains of the crude pictures with which the American Indians proudly narrated for posterity, or more probably for their associates, the story of their crossing the mighty lake.<sup>84</sup> A similar evolution of drawing into writing seems to have taken place throughout the Mediterranean world at the end of the Neolithic Age.

Certainly by 3600 B.C., and probably long before that, Elam, Sumeria and Egypt had developed a system of thought-pictures, called *hieroglyphics* because practised chiefly by the priests.<sup>44</sup> A similar system appeared in Crete ca. 2500 B.C. We shall see later how these hieroglyphics, representing thoughts, were, by the corruption of use, schematized and conventionalized into syllabaries—i.e., collections of signs indicating syllables; and how at last signs were used to indicate not the whole syllable but its initial sound, and therefore became letters. Such alphabetic writing probably dates back to 3000 B.C. in Egypt; in Crete it appears ca. 1600 B.C.<sup>45</sup> The Phœnicians did not create the alphabet, they marketed it; taking it apparently from Egypt and Crete,<sup>46</sup> they imported it piecemeal to Tyre, Sidon and Byblos, and exported it to every city on the Mediterranean; they were the middlemen, not the producers, of the alphabet. By the time of Homer the Greeks were taking over this Phœnician—or the allied Aramaic—alphabet, and were calling it by the Semitic names of the first two letters (*Alpha, Beta*; Hebrew *Aleph, Beth*).<sup>47</sup>

Writing seems to be a product and convenience of commerce; here again culture may see how much it owes to trade. When the priests devised a system of pictures with which to write their magical, ceremonial and medical formulas, the secular and clerical strains in history, usually in conflict, merged for a moment to produce the greatest human invention since the coming of speech. The development of writing almost created civilization by providing a means for the recording and transmission of knowledge, the accumulation of science, the growth of literature, and the spread of peace and order among varied but communicating tribes brought by one language under a single state. The earliest appearance of writing marks that ever-receding point at which history begins.

### 3. *Lost Civilizations*

#### *Polynesia — "Atlantis"*

In approaching now the history of civilized nations we must note that not only shall we be selecting a mere fraction of each culture for our study, but we shall be describing perhaps a minority of the civilizations that have probably existed on the earth. We cannot entirely ignore the legends, current throughout history, of civilizations once great and cultured, destroyed by some catastrophe of nature or war, and leaving not a wrack

behind; our recent exhuming of the civilizations of Crete, Sumeria and Yucatan indicates how true such tales may be.

The Pacific contains the ruins of at least one of these lost civilizations. The gigantic statuary of Easter Island, the Polynesian tradition of powerful nations and heroic warriors once ennobling Samoa and Tahiti, the artistic ability and poetic sensitivity of their present inhabitants, indicate a glory departed, a people not rising to civilization but fallen from a high estate. And in the Atlantic, from Iceland to the South Pole, the raised central bed of the oceans\* lends some support to the legend so fascinatingly transmitted to us by Plato,<sup>88</sup> of a civilization that once flourished on an island continent between Europe and Asia, and was suddenly lost when a geological convulsion swallowed that continent into the sea. Schliemann, the resurrector of Troy, believed that Atlantis had served as a mediating link between the cultures of Europe and Yucatan, and that Egyptian civilization had been brought from Atlantis.<sup>89</sup> Perhaps America itself was Atlantis, and some pre-Mayan culture may have been in touch with Africa and Europe in neolithic times. Possibly every discovery is a rediscovery.

Certainly it is probable, as Aristotle thought, that many civilizations came, made great inventions and luxuries, were destroyed, and lapsed from human memory. History, said Bacon, is the planks of a shipwreck; more of the past is lost than has been saved. We console ourselves with the thought that as the individual memory must forget the greater part of experience in order to be sane, so the race has preserved in its heritage only the most vivid and impressive—or is it only the best-recorded?—of its cultural experiments. Even if that racial heritage were but one tenth as rich as it is, no one could possibly absorb it all. We shall find the story full enough.

#### 4. Cradles of Civilization

##### *Central Asia — Anau — Lines of Dispersion*

It is fitting that this chapter of unanswerable questions should end with the query, "Where did civilization begin?"—which is also unanswerable. If we may trust the geologists, who deal with prehistoric mists as airy as

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\* A submarine plateau, from 2000 to 3000 metres below the surface, runs north and south through the mid-Atlantic, surrounded on both sides by "deeps" of 5000 to 6000 metres.

any metaphysics, the arid regions of central Asia were once moist and temperate, nourished with great lakes and abundant streams.<sup>76</sup> The recession of the last ice wave slowly dried up this area, until the rainfall was insufficient to support towns and states. City after city was abandoned as men fled west and east, north and south, in search of water; half buried in the desert lie ruined cities like Bactra, which must have held a teeming population within its twenty-two miles of circumference. As late as 1868 some 80,000 inhabitants of western Turkestan were forced to migrate because their district was being inundated by the moving sand.<sup>77</sup> There are many who believe that these now dying regions saw the first substantial development of that vague complex of order and provision, manners and morals, comfort and culture, which constitutes civilization.<sup>78</sup>

In 1907 Pumpelly unearthed at Anau, in southern Turkestan, pottery and other remains of a culture which he has ascribed to 9000 B.C., with a possible exaggeration of four thousand years.<sup>79</sup> Here we find the cultivation of wheat, barley and millet, the use of copper, the domestication of animals, and the ornamentation of pottery in styles so conventionalized as to suggest an artistic background and tradition of many centuries.<sup>80</sup> Apparently the culture of Turkestan was already very old in 5000 B.C. Perhaps it had historians who delved into its past in a vain search for the origins of civilization, and philosophers who eloquently mourned the degeneration of a dying race.

From this center, if we may imagine where we cannot know, a people driven by a rainless sky and betrayed by a desiccated earth migrated in three directions, bringing their arts and civilization with them. The arts, if not the race, reached eastward to China, Manchuria and North America; southward to northern India; westward to Elam, Sumeria, Egypt, even to Italy and Spain.<sup>81</sup> At Susa, in ancient Elam (modern Persia), remains have been found so similar in type to those at Anau that the re-creative imagination is almost justified in presuming cultural communication between Susa and Anau at the dawn of civilization (ca. 4000 B.C.).<sup>82</sup> A like kinship of early arts and products suggests a like relationship and continuity between prehistoric Mesopotamia and Egypt.

We cannot be sure which of these cultures came first, and it does not much matter; they were in essence of one family and one type. If we violate honored precedents here and place Elam and Sumeria before Egypt, it is from no vainglory of unconventional innovation, but rather because

the age of these Asiatic civilizations, compared with those of Africa and Europe, grows as our knowledge of them deepens. As the spades of archeology, after a century of victorious inquiry along the Nile, pass across Suez into Arabia, Palestine, Mesopotamia and Persia, it becomes more probable with every year of accumulating research that it was the rich delta of Mesopotamia's rivers that saw the earliest known scenes in the historic drama of civilization.





## BOOK ONE

### THE NEAR EAST

"At that time the gods called me, Hammurabi, the servant whose deeds are pleasing, . . . who helped his people in time of need, who brought about plenty and abundance, . . . to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, . . . to enlighten the land and further the welfare of the people"

*Code of Hammurabi, Prologue.*



# CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF NEAR EASTERN HISTORY\*

B.C.	EGYPT	B.C.	WESTERN ASIA
18000:	Nile Paleolithic Culture	40000:	Paleolithic Culture in Palestine
10000:	Nile Neolithic Culture	9000:	Bronze Culture in Turkestan
5000:	Nile Bronze Culture	4500:	Civilization in Susa and Kish
4241:	Egyptian Calendar appears (?)	3800:	Civilization in Crete
4000:	Badarian Culture	3638:	III Dynasty of Kish
3500-2631:	A. THE OLD KINGDOM	3600:	Civilization in Sumeria
3500-3100:	I-III Dynasties	3200:	Dynasty of Akshak in Sumeria
3100-2965:	IV Dynasty: the Pyramids	3100:	Ur-nina, first (?) King of Lagash
3098-3075:	Khufu ("Cheops" of Herodotus)	3089:	IV Dynasty of Kish
3067-3011:	Khafre ("Chephren")	2903:	King Urukagina reforms Lagash
3011-2988:	Menkaure ("Mycerinus")	2897:	Lugal-zaggisi conquers Lagash
2965-2631:	V-VI Dynasties	2872-2817:	Sargon I unites Sumeria & Akkad
2738-2644:	Pepi II (longest reign known)	2795-2739:	Naram-sin, King of Sumeria & Akkad
2631-2212:	The Feudal Age	2600:	Gudea King of Lagash
2375-1800:	B. THE MIDDLE KINGDOM	2474-2398:	Golden Age of Ur; 1st code of laws
2212-2000:	XII Dynasty	2357:	Sack of Ur by the Elamites
2212-2192:	Amenemhet I	2169-1926:	I Babylonian Dynasty
2192-2157:	Senusret ("Sesostris") I	2123-2081:	Hammurabi King of Babylon
2099-2061:	Senusret III	2117-2094:	Hammurabi conquers Sumeria & Elam
2061-2013:	Amenemhet III	1926-1703:	II Babylonian Dynasty
1800-1600:	The Hyksos Domination	1900:	Hittite Civilization appears
1580-1100:	C. THE EMPIRE	1800:	Civilization in Palestine
1580-1322:	XVIII Dynasty	1746-1169:	Kassite Domination in Babylonia
1545-1514:	Thutmose I	1716:	Rise of Assyria under Shamshi-Adad II
1514-1501:	Thutmose II	1650-1220:	Jewish Bondage in Egypt (?)
1501-1479:	Queen Hatshepsut	1600-1360:	Egyptian Domination of Palestine & Syria
1479-1447:	Thutmose III	1550:	The Civilization of Mitanni
1412-1376:	Amenhotep III	1461:	Burra-Buriash I King of Babylonia
1400-1360:	Age of the Tell-el-Amarna Correspondence; Revolt of Western Asia against Egypt	1276:	Shalmaneser I unifies Assyria
1380-1362:	Amenhotep IV (Ikhnaton)	1200:	Conquest of Canaan by the Jews
1360-1350:	Tutenkhamon	1115-1102:	Tiglath-Pileser I extends Assyria
1346-1210:	XIX Dynasty	1025-1010:	Saul King of the Jews
1346-1322:	Harmhab	1010-974:	David King of the Jews
1321-1300:	Seti I	1000-600:	Golden Age of Phoenicia & Syria
1300-1233:	Rameses II	974-937:	Solomon King of the Jews
1233-1223:	Merneptah	937:	Schism of the Jews: Judah & Israel
1214-1210:	Seti II	884-859:	Ashurnasirpal II King of Assyria
1205-1100:	XX Dynasty: the Ramessid Kings		
1204-1172:	Rameses III		
1100-947:	XXI Dynasty: the Libyan Kings		

\* All dates are B.C., and are approximate before 663 B.C. In the case of rulers the dates are of their reigns, not of their lives.

## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE

B.C.	EGYPT
947-720:	XXII Dynasty: the Bubastite Kings
947-925:	Sheshonk I
925-889:	Osorkon I
880-850:	Osorkon II
850-825:	Sheshonk II
821-769:	Sheshonk III
763-725:	Sheshonk IV
850-745:	XXIII Dynasty: The Theban Kings
725-663:	XXIV Dynasty: The Memphite Kings
745-663:	XXV Dynasty: The Ethiopian Kings
689-663:	Taharka
685:	Commercial Revival of Egypt
674-650:	Assyrian Occupation of Egypt
663-525:	XXVI Dynasty: the Saïte Kings
663-609:	Psamtik ("Psammetichos") I
663-525:	Saïte Revival of Egyptian Art
615:	Jews begin to colonize Egypt
609-593:	Niku ("Necho") II
605:	Niku begins the Hellenization of Egypt
593-588:	Psamtik II

B.C.	WESTERN ASIA
859-824:	Shalmaneser III King of Assyria
811-808:	Sammuramat ("Semiramis") in Assyria
785-700:	Golden Age of Armenia ("Urartu")
745-727:	Tiglath-Pileser III
732-722:	Assyria takes Damascus & Samaria
722-705:	Sargon II King of Assyria
709:	Deioces King of the Medes
705-681:	Sennacherib King of Assyria
702:	The First Isaiah
689:	Sennacherib sacks Babylon
681-669:	Esarhaddon King of Assyria
669-626:	Ashurbanipal ("Sardanapalus") King of Assyria
660-583:	Zarathustra ("Zoroaster")?
652:	Gyges King of Lydia
640-584:	Cyaxares King of the Medes
639:	Fall of Susa; end of Elam
639:	Josiah King of the Jews
625:	Nabopolassar restores independence of Babylon
621:	Beginnings of the <i>Pentateuch</i>
612:	Fall of Nineveh; end of Assyria
610-561:	Alyattes King of Lydia
605-562:	Nebuchadrezzar II King of Babylonia
600:	Jeremiah at Jerusalem; coinage in Lydia
597-586:	Nebuchadrezzar takes Jerusalem
586-538:	Jewish Captivity in Babylon

## OF NEAR EASTERN HISTORY

B.C.	EGYPT	B.C.	WESTERN ASIA
569-526:	Ahmose ("Amasis") II	580:	Ezekiel in Babylon
568-567:	Nebuchadrezzar II invades Egypt	570-546:	Croesus King of Lydia
	560: Growing Influence of Greece in Egypt	555-529:	Cyrus I King of the Medes & the Persians
526-525:	Psamtik III	546:	Cyrus takes Sardis
525:	Persian Conquest of Egypt	540:	The Second Isaiah
485:	Revolt of Egypt against Persia	539:	Cyrus takes Babylon & creates the Persian Empire
484:	Reconquest of Egypt by Xerxes	529-522:	Cambyes King of Persia
482:	Egypt joins with Persia in war against Greece	521-485:	Darius I King of Persia
455:	Failure of Athenian Expedition to Egypt	520:	Building of 2nd Temple at Jerusalem
		490:	Battle of Marathon
		485-464:	Xerxes I King of Persia
		480:	Battle of Salamis
		464-423:	Artaxerxes I King of Persia
		450:	The <i>Book of Job</i> (?)
		444:	Ezra at Jerusalem
		423-404:	Darius II King of Persia
		404-359:	Artaxerxes II King of Persia
		401:	Cyrus the Younger defeated at Cunaxa
		359-338:	Ochus King of Persia
		338-330:	Darius III King of Persia
		334:	Battle of the Granicus; Alexander enters Jerusalem
		333:	Battle of Issus
		331:	Alexander takes Babylon
283-30:	The Ptolemaic Kings	330:	Battle of Arbela; the Near East becomes part of Alexander's Empire
30:	Egypt absorbed into the Roman Empire		

## Sumeria

### *Orient-ation—Contributions of the Near East to Western civilization*

WRITTEN history is at least six thousand years old. During half of this period the center of human affairs, so far as they are now known to us, was in the Near East. By this vague term we shall mean here all southwestern Asia south of Russia and the Black Sea, and west of India and Afghanistan; still more loosely, we shall include within it Egypt, too, as anciently bound up with the Near East in one vast web and communicating complex of Oriental civilization. In this rough theatre of teeming peoples and conflicting cultures were developed the agriculture and commerce, the horse and wagon, the coinage and letters of credit, the crafts and industries, the law and government, the mathematics and medicine, the enemas and drainage systems, the geometry and astronomy, the calendar and clock and zodiac, the alphabet and writing, the paper and ink, the books and libraries and schools, the literature and music, the sculpture and architecture, the glazed pottery and fine furniture, the monotheism and monogamy, the cosmetics and jewelry, the checkers and dice, the ten-pins and income-tax, the wet-nurses and beer, from which our own European and American culture derive by a continuous succession through the mediation of Crete and Greece and Rome. The "Aryans" did not establish civilization—they took it from Babylonia and Egypt. Greece did not begin civilization—it inherited far more civilization than it began; it was the spoiled heir of three millenniums of arts and sciences brought to its cities from the Near East by the fortunes of trade and war. In studying and honoring the Near East we shall be acknowledging a debt long due to the real founders of European and American civilization.

## I. ELAM

*The culture of Susa—The potter's wheel—The wagon-wheel*

If the reader will look at a map of Persia, and will run his finger north along the Tigris from the Persian Gulf to Amara, and then east across the Iraq border to the modern town of Shushan, he will have located the site of the ancient city of Susa, center of a region known to the Jews as Elam—the high land. In this narrow territory, protected on the west by marshes, and on the east by the mountains that shoulder the great Iranian Plateau, a people of unknown race and origin developed one of the first historic civilizations. Here, a generation ago, French archeologists found human remains dating back 20,000 years, and evidences of an advanced culture as old as 4500 B.C.\*<sup>1</sup>

Apparently the Elamites had recently emerged from a nomad life of hunting and fishing; but already they had copper weapons and tools, cultivated grains and domesticated animals, hieroglyphic writing and business documents, mirrors and jewelry, and a trade that reached from Egypt to India.<sup>2</sup> In the midst of chipped flints that bring us back to the Neolithic Age we find finished vases elegantly rounded and delicately painted with geometric designs, or with picturesque representations of animals and plants; some of this pottery is ranked among the finest ever made by man.<sup>3</sup> Here is the oldest appearance not only of the potter's wheel but of the wagon wheel; this modest but vital vehicle of civilization is found only later in Babylonia, and still later in Egypt.<sup>4</sup> From these already complex beginnings the Elamites rose to troubled power, conquering Sumeria and Babylon, and being conquered by them, turn by turn. The city of Susa survived six thousand years of history, lived through the imperial zeniths of Sumeria, Babylonia, Egypt, Assyria, Persia, Greece and Rome, and flourished, under the name of Shushan, as late as the fourteenth century of our era. At various times it grew to great wealth; when Ashurbanipal captured and sacked it (646 B.C.) his historians recounted without understatement the varied booty of gold and silver, precious stones and royal ornaments, costly garments and regal furniture, cosmetics and chariots, which the conqueror brought in his train to Nineveh. History so soon began its tragic alternance of art and war.

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\* Professor Breasted believes that the antiquity of this culture, and that of Anau, has been exaggerated by De Morgan, Pumpelly and other students.<sup>5</sup>



## II. THE SUMERIANS

1. *The Historical Background*

*The exhuming of Sumeria—Geography—Race—Appearance—  
The Sumerian Flood—The kings—An ancient reformer—  
—Sargon of Akkad—The Golden Age of Ur*

If we return to our map and follow the combined Tigris and Euphrates from the Persian Gulf to where these historic streams diverge (at modern Kurna), and then follow the Euphrates westward, we shall find, north and south of it, the buried cities of ancient Sumeria: Eridu (now Abu Shahrein), Ur (now Mukayyar), Uruk (Biblical Erech, now Warka), Larsa (Biblical Ellasar, now Senkereh), Lagash (now Shippurla), Nippur (Niffer) and Nisin. Follow the Euphrates northwest to Babylon, once the most famous city of Mesopotamia (the land "between the rivers"); observe, directly east of it, Kish, site of the oldest culture known in this region; then pass some sixty miles farther up the Euphrates to Agade, capital, in ancient days, of the Kingdom of Akkad. The early history of Mesopotamia is in one aspect the struggle of the non-Semitic peoples of Sumeria to preserve their independence against the expansion and inroads of the Semites from Kish and Agade and other centers in the north. In the midst of their struggles these varied stocks unconsciously, perhaps unwillingly, coöperated to produce the first extensive civilization known to history, and one of the most creative and unique.\*

Despite much research we cannot tell of what race the Sumerians were, nor by what route they entered Sumeria. Perhaps they came from central

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\* The unearthing of this forgotten culture is one of the romances of archeology. To those whom, with a poor sense of the amplitude of time, we call "the ancients"—that is, to the Romans, the Greeks and the Jews—Sumeria was unknown. Herodotus apparently never heard of it; if he did, he ignored it, as something more ancient to him than he to us. Berosus, a Babylonian historian writing about 250 B.C., knew of Sumeria only through the veil of a legend. He described a race of monsters, led by one Oannes, coming out of the Persian Gulf, and introducing the arts of agriculture, metal-working, and writing; "all the things that make for the amelioration of life," he declares, "were bequeathed to men by Oannes, and since that time no further inventions have been made."<sup>1</sup> Not till two thousand years after Berosus was Sumeria rediscovered. In 1850 Hincks recognized that cuneiform writing—made by pressing a wedge-pointed stylus upon soft clay, and used in the Semitic languages of the Near East—had been borrowed from an earlier people with a largely non-Semitic speech; and Oppert gave to this hypothetical people the name

Asia, or the Caucasus, or Armenia, and moved through northern Mesopotamia down the Euphrates and the Tigris—along which, as at Ashur, evidences of their earliest culture have been found; perhaps, as the legend says, they sailed in from the Persian Gulf, from Egypt or elsewhere, and slowly made their way up the great rivers; perhaps they came from Susa, among whose relics is an asphalt head bearing all the characteristics of the Sumerian type; perhaps, even, they were of remote Mongolian origin, for there is much in their language that resembles the Mongol speech.<sup>9</sup> We do not know.

The remains show them as a short and stocky people, with high, straight, non-Semitic nose, slightly receding forehead and downward-sloping eyes. Many wore beards, some were clean-shaven, most of them shaved the upper lip. They clothed themselves in fleece and finely woven wool; the women draped the garment from the left shoulder, the men bound it at the waist and left the upper half of the body bare. Later the male dress crept up towards the neck with the advance of civilization, but servants, male and female, while indoors, continued to go naked from head to waist. The head was usually covered with a cap, and the feet were shod with sandals; but well-to-do women had shoes of soft leather, heel-less, and laced like our own. Bracelets, necklaces, anklets, finger-rings and ear-rings made the women of Sumeria, as recently in America, show-windows of their husbands' prosperity.<sup>10</sup>

When their civilization was already old—about 2300 B.C.—the poets and scholars of Sumeria tried to reconstruct its ancient history. The poets wrote legends of a creation, a primitive Paradise and a terrible flood that engulfed and destroyed it because of the sin of an ancient king.<sup>11</sup> This flood passed down into Babylonian and Hebrew tradition, and became part of the Christian creed. In 1929 Professor Woolley, digging into the ruins of Ur, discovered, at considerable depth, an eight-foot layer of silt and clay; this, if we are to believe him, was deposited during a catastrophic overflow of the

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"Sumerian." About the same time Rawlinson and his aides found, among Babylonian ruins, tablets containing vocabularies of this ancient tongue, with interlinear translations, in modern college style, from the older language into Babylonian.<sup>8</sup> In 1854 two Englishmen uncovered the sites of Ur, Eridu and Uruk; at the end of the nineteenth century French explorers revealed the remains of Lagash, including tablets recording the history of the Sumerian kings; and in our own time Professor Woolley of the University of Pennsylvania, and many others, have exhumed the primeval city of Ur, where the Sumerians appear to have reached civilization by 4500 B.C. So the students of many nations have worked together on this chapter of that endless mystery story in which the detectives are archeologists and the prey is historic truth. Nevertheless, there has been as yet only a beginning of research in Sumeria; there is no telling what vistas of civilization and history will be opened up when the ground has been worked, and the material studied, as men have worked and studied in Egypt during the last one hundred years.

Euphrates, which lingered in later memory as the Flood. Beneath that layer were the remains of a prediluvian culture that would later be pictured by the poets as a Golden Age.

Meanwhile the priest-historians sought to create a past spacious enough for the development of all the marvels of Sumerian civilization. They formulated lists of their ancient kings, extending the dynasties before the Flood to 432,000 years;<sup>18</sup> and told such impressive stories of two of these rulers, Tammuz and Gilgamesh, that the latter became the hero of the greatest poem in Babylonian literature, and Tammuz passed down into the pantheon of Babylon and became the Adonis of the Greeks. Perhaps the priests exaggerated a little the antiquity of their civilization. We may vaguely judge the age of Sumerian culture by observing that the ruins of Nippur are found to a depth of sixty-six feet, of which almost as many feet extend below the remains of Sargon of Akkad as rise above it to the topmost stratum (ca. 1 A.D.);<sup>19</sup> on this basis Nippur would go back to 5262 B.C. Tenacious dynasties of city-kings seem to have flourished at Kish ca. 4500 B.C., and at Ur ca. 3500 B.C. In the competition of these two primeval centers we have the first form of that opposition between Semite and non-Semite which was to be one bloody theme of Near-Eastern history from the Semitic ascendancy of Kish and the conquests of the Semitic kings Sargon I and Hammurabi, through the capture of Babylon by the "Aryan" generals Cyrus and Alexander in the sixth and fourth centuries before Christ, and the conflicts of Crusaders and Saracens for the Holy Sepulchre and the emoluments of trade, down to the efforts of the British Government to dominate and pacify the divided Semites of the Near East today.

From 3000 B.C. onward the clay-tablet records kept by the priests, and found in the ruins of Ur, present a reasonably accurate account of the accessions and coronations, uninterrupted victories and sublime deaths of the petty kings who ruled the city-states of Ur, Lagash, Uruk, and the rest; the writing of history and the partiality of historians are very ancient things. One king, Urukagina of Lagash, was a royal reformer, an enlightened despot who issued decrees aimed at the exploitation of the poor by the rich, and of everybody by the priests. The high priest, says one edict, must no longer "come into the garden of a poor mother and take wood therefrom, nor gather tax in fruit therefrom"; burial-fees were to be cut to one-fifth of what they had been; and the clergy and high officials were forbidden to share among themselves the revenues and cattle offered to the gods. It was the King's boast that he "gave liberty to his people";<sup>20</sup>

and surely the tablets that preserve his decrees reveal to us the oldest, briefest and justest code of laws in history.

This lucid interval was ended normally by one Lugal-zaggisi, who invaded Lagash, overthrew Urukagina, and sacked the city at the height of its prosperity. The temples were destroyed, the citizens were massacred in the streets, and the statues of the gods were led away in ignominious bondage. One of the earliest poems in existence is a clay tablet, apparently 4800 years old, on which the Sumerian poet Dingiraddamu mourns for the raped goddess of Lagash:

For the city, alas, the treasures, my soul doth sigh,  
For my city Girsu (Lagash), alas, the treasures, my soul doth sigh.  
In holy Girsu the children are in distress.  
Into the interior of the splendid shrine he (the invader) pressed;  
The august Queen from her temple he brought forth.  
O Lady of my city, desolated, when wilt thou return?<sup>18</sup>

We pass by the bloody Lugal-zaggisi, and other Sumerian kings of mighty name: Lugal-shagengur, Lugal-kigub-nidudu, Ninigi-dubti, Lugal-andanukhunga, . . . Meanwhile another people, of Semitic race, had built the kingdom of Akkad under the leadership of Sargon I, and had established its capital at Agade some two hundred miles northwest of the Sumerian city-states. A monolith found at Susa portrays Sargon armed with the dignity of a majestic beard, and dressed in all the pride of long authority. His origin was not royal: history could find no father for him, and no other mother than a temple prostitute.<sup>19</sup> Sumerian legend composed for him an autobiography quite Mosaic in its beginning: "My humble mother conceived me; in secret she brought me forth. She placed me in a basket-boat of rushes; with pitch she closed my door."<sup>20</sup> Rescued by a workman, he became a cup-bearer to the king, grew in favor and influence, rebelled, displaced his master, and mounted the throne of Agade. He called himself "King of Universal Dominion," and ruled a small portion of Mesopotamia. Historians call him "the Great," for he invaded many cities, captured much booty, and killed many men. Among his victims was that same Lugal-zaggisi who had despoiled Lagash and violated its goddess; him Sargon defeated and carried off to Nippur in chains. East and west, north and south the mighty warrior marched, conquering Elam, washing his weapons in symbolic triumph in the Persian Gulf, crossing

western Asia, reaching the Mediterranean,<sup>18</sup> and establishing the first great empire in history. For fifty-five years he held sway, while legends gathered about him and prepared to make him a god. His reign closed with all his empire in revolt.

Three sons succeeded him in turn. The third, Naram-sin, was a mighty builder, of whose works nothing remains but a lovely stele, or memorial slab, recording his victory over an obscure king. This powerful relief, found by De Morgan at Susa in 1897, and now a treasure of the Louvre, shows a muscular Naram-sin armed with bow and dart, stepping with royal dignity upon the bodies of his fallen foes, and apparently prepared to answer with quick death the appeal of the vanquished for mercy; while between them another victim, pierced through the neck with an arrow, falls dying. Behind them tower the Zagros Mountains; and on one hill is the record, in elegant cuneiform, of Naram-sin's victory. Here the art of carving is already adult and confident, already guided and strengthened with a long tradition.

To be burned to the ground is not always a lasting misfortune for a city; it is usually an advantage from the standpoint of architecture and sanitation. By the twenty-sixth century B.C. we find Lagash flourishing again, now under another enlightened monarch, Gudea, whose stocky statues are the most prominent remains of Sumerian sculpture. The diorite figure in the Louvre shows him in a pious posture, with his head crossed by a heavy band resembling a model of the Colosseum, hands folded in his lap, bare shoulders and feet, and short, chubby legs covered by a bell-like skirt embroidered with a volume of hieroglyphics. The strong but regular features reveal a man thoughtful and just, firm and yet refined. Gudea was honored by his people not as a warrior but as a Sumerian Aurelius, devoted to religion, literature and good works; he built temples, promoted the study of classical antiquities in the spirit of the expeditions that unearthed him, and tempered the strength of the strong in mercy to the weak. One of his inscriptions reveals the policy for which his people worshiped him, after his death, as a god: "During seven years the maid-servant was the equal of her mistress, the slave walked beside his master, and in my town the weak rested by the side of the strong."<sup>19</sup>

Meanwhile "Ur of the Chaldees" was having one of the most prosperous epochs in its long career from 3,500 B.C. (the apparent age of its oldest graves) to 700 B.C. Its greatest king, Ur-engur, brought all

western Asia under his pacific sway, and proclaimed for all Sumeria the first extensive code of laws in history. "By the laws of righteousness of Shamash forever I established justice."<sup>20</sup> As Ur grew rich by the trade that flowed through it on the Euphrates, Ur-engur, like Pericles, beautified his city with temples, and built lavishly in the subject cities of Larsa, Uruk and Nippur. His son Dungi continued his work through a reign of fifty-eight years, and ruled so wisely that the people deified him as the god who had brought back their ancient Paradise.

But soon that glory faded. The warlike Elamites from the East and the rising Amorites from the West swept down upon the leisure, prosperity and peace of Ur, captured its king, and sacked the city with primitive thoroughness. The poets of Ur sang sad chants about the rape of the statue of Ishtar, their beloved mother-goddess, torn from her shrine by profane invaders. The form of these poems is unexpectedly first-personal, and the style does not please the sophisticated ear; but across the four thousand years that separate us from the Sumerian singer we feel the desolation of his city and his people.

Me the foe hath ravished, yea, with hands unwashed;  
Me his hands have ravished, made me die of terror.  
Oh, I am wretched! Naught of reverence hath he!  
Stripped me of my robes, and clothed therein his consort,  
Tore my jewels from me, therewith decked his daughter.  
(Now) I tread his courts—my very person sought he  
In the shrines. Alas, the day when to go forth I trembled.  
He pursued me in my temple; he made me quake with fear,  
There within my walls; and like a dove that fluttering percheth  
On a rafter, like a flitting owlet in a cavern hidden,  
Birdlike from my shrine he chased me,  
From my city like a bird he chased me, me sighing,  
"Far behind, behind me is my temple."<sup>21</sup>

So for two hundred years, which to our self-centered eyes seem but an empty moment, Elam and Amor ruled Sumeria. Then from the north came the great Hammurabi, King of Babylon; retook from the Elamites Uruk and Isin; bided his time for twenty-three years; invaded Elam and captured its king; established his sway over Amor and distant Assyria, built an empire of unprecedented power, and disciplined it with a universal

law. For many centuries now, until the rise of Persia, the Semites would rule the Land between the Rivers. Of the Sumerians nothing more is heard; their little chapter in the book of history was complete.

## 2. *Economic Life*

### *The soil — Industry — Trade — Classes — Science*

But Sumerian civilization remained. Sumer and Akkad still produced handicraftsmen, poets, artists, sages and saints; the culture of the southern cities passed north along the Euphrates and the Tigris to Babylonia and Assyria as the initial heritage of Mesopotamian civilization.

At the basis of this culture was a soil made fertile by the annual overflow of rivers swollen with the winter rains. The overflow was perilous as well as useful; the Sumerians learned to channel it safely through irrigating canals that ribbed and crossed their land; and they commemorated those early dangers by legends that told of a flood, and how at last the land had been separated from the waters, and mankind had been saved.<sup>7</sup> This irrigation system, dating from 4000 B.C., was one of the great achievements of Sumerian civilization, and certainly its foundation. Out of these carefully watered fields came abounding crops of corn, barley, spelt, dates, and many vegetables. The plough appeared early, drawn by oxen as even with us until yesterday, and already furnished with a tubular seed-drill. The gathered harvest was threshed by drawing over it great sledges of wood armed with flint teeth that cut the straw for the cattle and released the grain for men.<sup>8</sup>

It was in many ways a primitive culture. The Sumerians made some use of copper and tin, and occasionally mixed them to produce bronze; now and then they went so far as to make large implements of iron.<sup>9</sup> But metal was still a luxury and a rarity. Most Sumerian tools were of flint; some, like the sickles for cutting the barley, were of clay; and certain finer articles, such as needles and awls, used ivory and bone.<sup>10</sup> Weaving was done on a large scale under the supervision of overseers appointed by the king,<sup>11</sup> after the latest fashion of governmentally controlled industry. Houses were made of reeds, usually plastered with an adobe mixture of clay and straw moistened with water and hardened by the sun; such dwellings are still easy to find in what was once Sumeria. The hut had wooden doors, revolving upon socket hinges of stone. The floors were ordinarily

the beaten earth; the roofs were arched by bending the reeds together at the top, or were made flat with mud-covered reeds stretched over crossbeams of wood. Cows, sheep, goats and pigs roamed about the dwelling in primeval comradeship with man. Water for drinking was drawn from wells.<sup>28</sup>

Goods were carried chiefly by water. Since stone was rare in Sumeria it was brought up the Gulf or down the rivers, and then through numerous canals to the quays of the cities. But land transportation was developing; at Kish the Oxford Field Expedition recently unearthed the oldest wheeled vehicles known.<sup>29</sup> Here and there in the ruins are business seals bearing indications of traffic with Egypt and India.<sup>30</sup> There was no coinage yet, and trade was normally by barter; but gold and silver were already in use as standards of value, and were often accepted in exchange for goods—sometimes in the form of ingots and rings of definite worth, but generally in quantities measured by weight in each transaction. Many of the clay tablets that have brought down to us fragments of Sumerian writing are business documents, revealing a busy commercial life. One tablet speaks, with *fin-de-siècle* weariness, of “the city, where the tumult of man is.” Contracts had to be confirmed in writing and duly witnessed. A system of credit existed by which goods, gold or silver might be borrowed, interest to be paid in the same material as the loan, and at rates ranging from 15 to 33% per annum.<sup>31</sup> Since the stability of a society may be partly measured by inverse relation with the rate of interest, we may suspect that Sumerian business, like ours, lived in an atmosphere of economic and political uncertainty and doubt.

Gold and silver have been found abundantly in the tombs, not only as jewelry, but as vessels, weapons, ornaments, even as tools. Rich and poor were stratified into many classes and gradations; slavery was highly developed, and property rights were already sacred.<sup>32</sup> Between the rich and the poor a middle class took form, composed of small-business men, scholars, physicians and priests. Medicine flourished, and had a specific for every disease; but it was still bound up with theology, and admitted that sickness, being due to possession by evil spirits, could never be cured without the exorcising of these demons. A calendar of uncertain age and origin divided the year into lunar months, adding a month every three or four years to reconcile the calendar with the seasons and the sun. Each city gave its own names to the months.<sup>33</sup>



### 3. Government

#### *The kings—Ways of war—The feudal barons—Law*

Indeed each city, as long as it could, maintained a jealous independence, and indulged itself in a private king. It called him *patesi*, or priest-king, indicating by the very word that government was bound up with religion. By 2800 B.C. the growth of trade made such municipal separatism impossible, and generated "empires" in which some dominating personality subjected the cities and their *patesis* to his power, and wove them into an economic and political unity. The despot lived in a Renaissance atmosphere of violence and fear; at any moment he might be despatched by the same methods that had secured him the throne. He dwelt in an inaccessible palace, whose two entrances were so narrow as to admit only one person at a time; to the right and left were recesses from which secret guards could examine every visitor, or pounce upon him with daggers.<sup>31</sup> Even the king's temple was private, hidden away in his palace, so that he might perform his religious duties without exposure, or neglect them inconspicuously.

The king went to battle in a chariot, leading a motley host armed with bows, arrows and spears. The wars were waged frankly for commercial routes and goods, without catchwords as a sop for idealists. King Manishtusu of Akkad announced frankly that he was invading Elam to get control of its silver mines, and to secure diorite stone to immortalize himself with statuary—the only instance known of a war fought for the sake of art. The defeated were customarily sold into slavery; or, if this was unprofitable, they were slaughtered on the battlefield. Sometimes a tenth of the prisoners, struggling vainly in a net, were offered as living victims to the thirsty gods. As in Renaissance Italy, the chauvinistic separatism of the cities stimulated life and art, but led to civic violence and suicidal strife that weakened each petty state, and at last destroyed Sumeria.<sup>32</sup>

In the empires social order was maintained through a feudal system. After a successful war the ruler gave tracts of land to his valiant chieftains, and exempted such estates from taxation; these men kept order in their territories, and provided soldiers and supplies for the exploits of the king. The finances of the government were obtained by taxes in kind, stored in royal warehouses, and distributed as pay to officials and employees of the state.<sup>33</sup>

FIG. 5—*Stele of  
Naram-sin*  
Louvre; photo  
by Archives  
Photographiques  
d'Art et  
d'Histoire

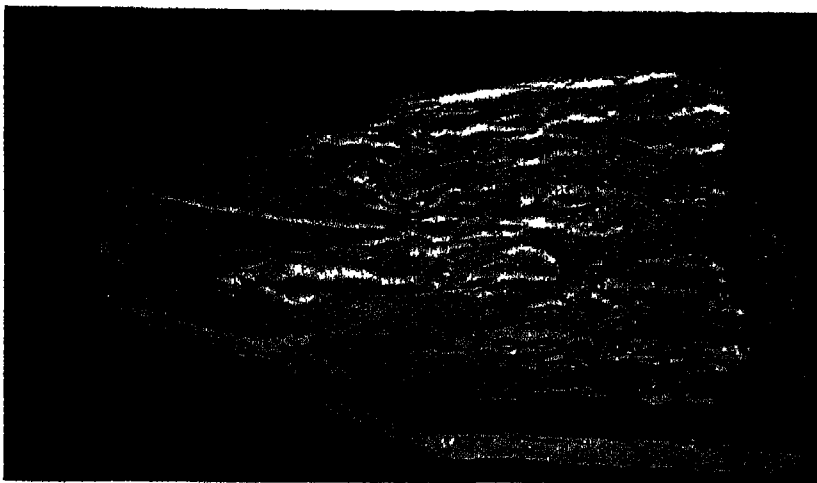


FIG. 6—*The  
"little" Gudea*  
Louvre; photo  
by Metropolitan  
Museum of Art



FIG. 7—*Temple of Der-el-Bahri*  
Photo by Lindsley F. Hall

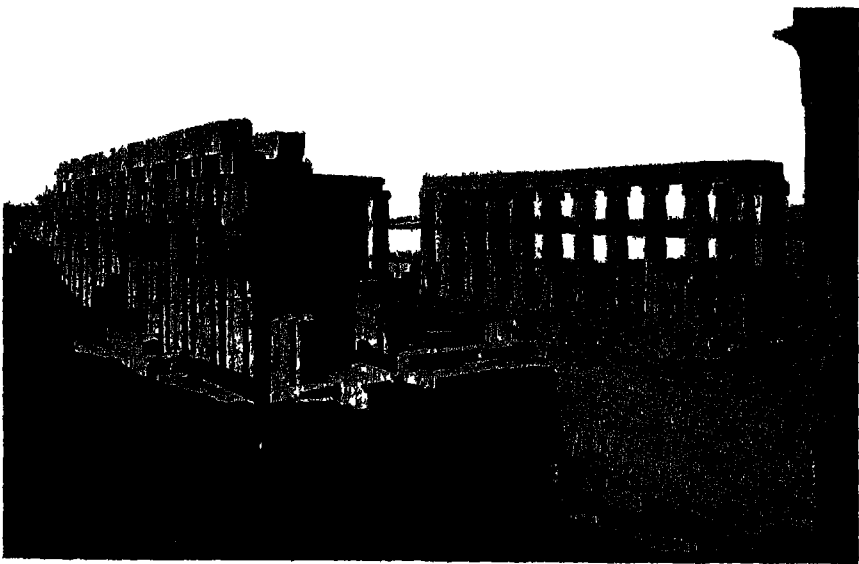


FIG. 8—*Colonnade and court of the temple at Luxor*  
Photo by Metropolitan Museum of Art

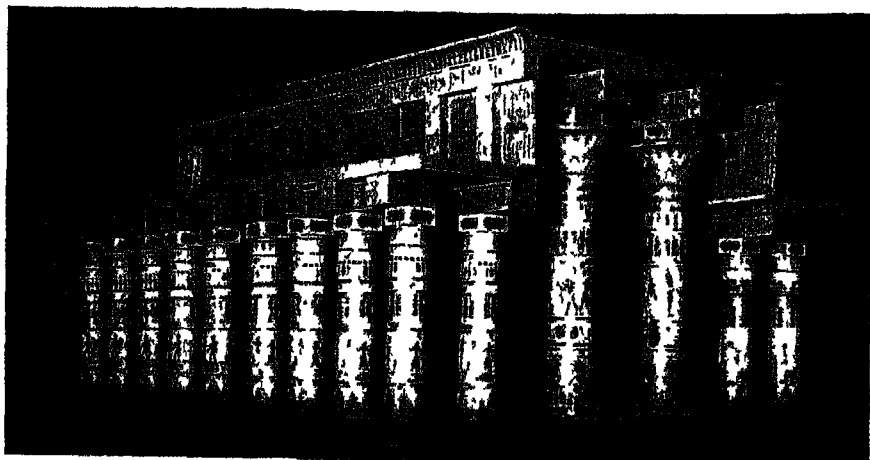


FIG. 9—*Hypothetical reconstruction of the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak*  
From a model in the Metropolitan Museum of Art



FIG. 10—*Colonnade of the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak*  
Underwood & Underwood

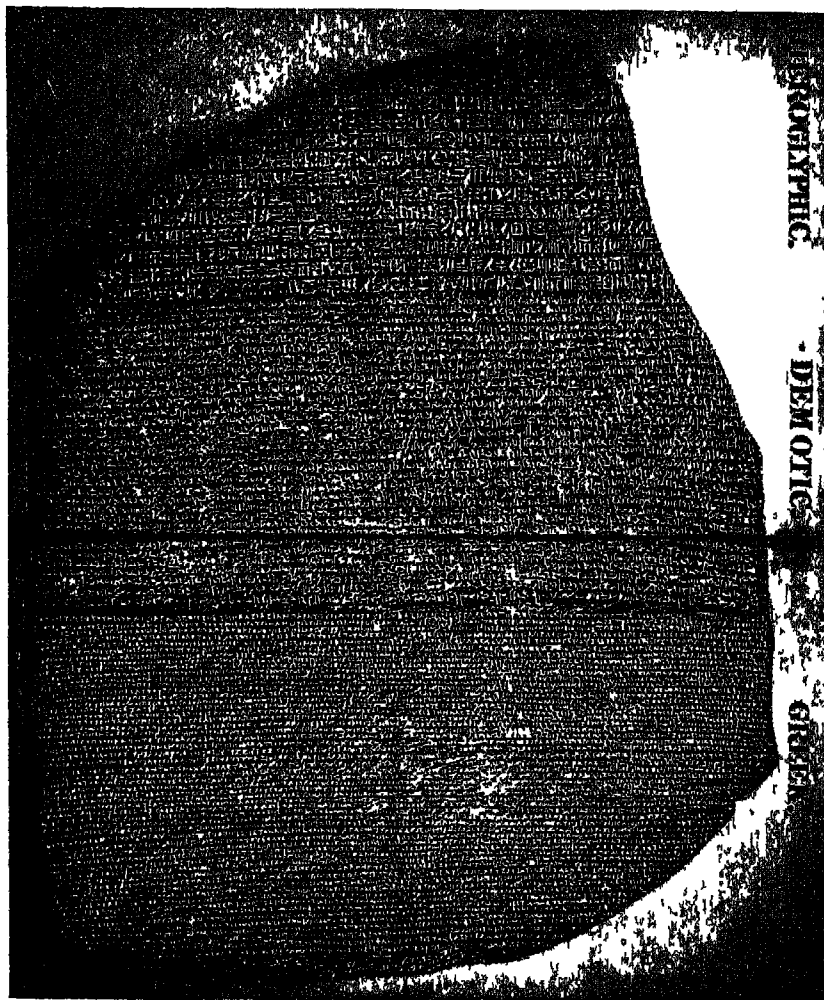


FIG. 11—*The Rosetta Stone*  
British Museum

To this system of royal and feudal administration was added a body of law, already rich with precedents when Ur-engur and Dungi codified the statutes of Ur; this was the fountainhead of Hammurabi's famous code. It was cruder and simpler than later legislation, but less severe: where, for example, the Semitic code killed a woman for adultery, the Sumerian code merely allowed the husband to take a second wife, and reduce the first to a subordinate position.<sup>97</sup> The law covered commercial as well as sexual relations, and regulated all loans and contracts, all buying and selling, all adoptions and bequests. Courts of justice sat in the temples, and the judges were for the most part priests, professional judges presided over a superior court. The best element in this code was a plan for avoiding litigation: every case was first submitted to a public arbitrator whose duty it was to bring about an amicable settlement without recourse to law.<sup>98</sup> It is a poor civilization from which we may not learn something to improve our own.

#### 4. Religion and Morality

*The Sumerian Pantheon — The food of the gods — Mythology —  
Education—A Sumerian prayer—Temple prostitutes—The  
rights of woman—Sumerian cosmetics*

King Ur-engur proclaimed his code of laws in the name of the great god Shamash, for government had so soon discovered the political utility of heaven. Having been found useful, the gods became innumerable; every city and state, every human activity, had some inspiring and disciplinary divinity. Sun-worship, doubtless already old when Sumeria began, expressed itself in the cult of Shamash, "light of the gods," who passed the night in the depths of the north, until Dawn opened its gates for him; then he mounted the sky like a flame, driving his chariot over the steeps of the firmament; the sun was merely a wheel of his fiery car.<sup>99</sup> Nippur built great temples to the god Enlil and his consort Ninlil, Uruk worshiped especially the virgin earth-goddess Innini, known to the Semites of Akkad as Ishtar—the loose and versatile Aphrodite-Demeter of the Near East. Kish and Lagash worshiped a *Mater Dolorosa*, the sorrowful mother-goddess Ninkarsag, who, grieved with the unhappiness of men, interceded for them with sterner deities.<sup>100</sup> Ningirsu was the god of irrigation, the "Lord of Floods"; Abu or Tammuz was the god of vegetation. Even Sin was a god—of the moon; he was represented in human form with a thin

crescent about his head, presaging the halos of medieval saints. The air was full of spirits—beneficent angels, one each as protector to every Sumerian, and demons or devils who sought to expel the protective deity and take possession of body and soul.

Most of the gods lived in the temples, where they were provided by the faithful with revenue, food and wives. The tablets of Gudea list the objects which the gods preferred: oxen, goats, sheep, doves, chickens, ducks, fish, dates, figs, cucumbers, butter, oil and cakes;" we may judge from this list that the well-to-do Sumerian enjoyed a plentiful *cuisine*. Originally, it seems, the gods preferred human flesh; but as human morality improved they had to be content with animals. A liturgical tablet found in the Sumerian ruins says, with strange theological premonitions: "The lamb is the substitute for humanity; he hath given up a lamb for his life."<sup>18</sup> Enriched by such beneficence, the priests became the wealthiest and most powerful class in the Sumerian cities. In most matters they were the government; it is difficult to make out to what extent the *patesi* was a priest, and to what extent a king. Urukagina rose like a Luther against the exactions of the clergy, denounced them for their voracity, accused them of taking bribes in their administration of the law, and charged that they were levying such taxes upon farmers and fishermen as to rob them of the fruits of their toil. He swept the courts clear for a time of these corrupt officials, and established laws regulating the taxes and fees paid to the temples, protecting the helpless against extortion, and providing against the violent alienation of funds or property."<sup>19</sup> Already the world was old, and well established in its time-honored ways.

Presumably the priests recovered their power when Urukagina died, quite as they were to recover their power in Egypt after the passing of Ikhnaton; men will pay any price for mythology. Even in this early age the great myths of religion were taking form. Since food and tools were placed in the graves with the dead, we may presume that the Sumerians believed in an after-life."<sup>20</sup> But like the Greeks they pictured the other world as a dark abode of miserable shadows, to which all the dead descended indiscriminately. They had not yet conceived heaven and hell, eternal reward and punishment; they offered prayer and sacrifice not for "eternal life," but for tangible advantages here on the earth."<sup>21</sup> Later legend told how Adapa, a sage of Eridu, had been initiated into all lore by Ea, goddess of wisdom; one secret only had been refused him—the knowledge of

deathless life.<sup>46</sup> Another legend narrated how the gods had created man happy; how man, by his free will, had sinned, and been punished with a flood, from which but one man—Tagtug the weaver—had survived. Tagtug forfeited longevity and health by eating the fruit of a forbidden tree.<sup>47</sup>

The priests transmitted education as well as mythology, and doubtless sought to teach, as well as to rule, by their myths. To most of the temples were attached schools wherein the clergy instructed boys and girls in writing and arithmetic, formed their habits into patriotism and piety, and prepared some of them for the high profession of scribe. School tablets survive, encrusted with tables of multiplication and division, square and cube roots, and exercises in applied geometry.<sup>48</sup> That the instruction was not much more foolish than that which is given to our children appears from a tablet which is a Lucretian outline of anthropology: "Mankind when created did not know of bread for eating or garments for wearing. The people walked with limbs on the ground, they ate herbs with their mouths like sheep, they drank ditch-water."<sup>49</sup>

What nobility of spirit and utterance this first of the historic religions could rise to shines out in the prayer of King Gudea to the goddess Bau, the patron deity of Lagash:

O my Queen, the Mother who established Lagash,  
The people on whom thou lookest is rich in power;  
The worshiper on whom thou lookest, his life is prolonged.  
I have no mother—thou art my mother;  
I have no father—thou art my father. . . .  
My goddess Bau, thou knowest what is good;  
Thou hast given me the breath of life.  
Under the protection of thee, my Mother,  
In thy shadow I will reverently dwell.<sup>50</sup>

Women were attached to every temple, some as domestics, some as concubines for the gods or their duly constituted representatives on earth. To serve the temples in this way did not seem any disgrace to a Sumerian girl; her father was proud to devote her charms to the alleviation of divine monotony, and celebrated the admission of his daughter to these sacred functions with ceremonial sacrifice, and the presentation of the girl's marriage dowry to the temple.<sup>51</sup>

Marriage was already a complex institution regulated by many laws.



The bride kept control of the dowry given her by her father in marriage, and though she held it jointly with her husband, she alone determined its bequest. She exercised equal rights with her husband over their children; and in the absence of the husband and a grown-up son she administered the estate as well as the home. She could engage in business independently of her husband, and could keep or dispose of her own slaves. Sometimes, like Shub-ad, she could rise to the status of queen, and rule her city with luxurious and imperious grace.<sup>28</sup> But in all crises the man was lord and master. Under certain conditions he could sell his wife, or hand her over as a slave to pay his debts. The double standard was already in force, as a corollary of property and inheritance: adultery in the man was a forgivable whim, but in the woman it was punished with death. She was expected to give many children to her husband and the state; if barren, she could be divorced without further reason; if merely averse to continuous maternity she was drowned. Children were without legal rights; their parents, by the act of publicly disowning them, secured their banishment from the city.<sup>29</sup>

Nevertheless, as in most civilizations, the women of the upper classes almost balanced, by their luxury and their privileges, the toil and disabilities of their poorer sisters. Cosmetics and jewelry are prominent in the Sumerian tombs. In Queen Shub-ad's grave Professor Woolley picked up a little compact of blue-green malachite, golden pins with knobs of lapis-lazuli, and a vanity-case of filigree gold shell. This vanity-case, as large as a little finger, contained a tiny spoon, presumably for scooping up rouge from the compact; a metal stick, perhaps for training the cuticle; and a pair of tweezers probably used to train the eyebrows or to pluck out inopportune hairs. The Queen's rings were made of gold wire; one ring was inset with segments of lapis-lazuli; her necklace was of fluted lapis and gold. Surely there is nothing new under the sun; and the difference between the first woman and the last could pass through the eye of a needle.

### 5. Letters and Arts

*Writing—Literature—Temples and palaces—Statuary—Ceramics—  
Jewelry—Summary of Sumerian civilization*

The startling fact in the Sumerian remains is writing. The marvelous art seems already well advanced, fit to express complex thought in com-

merce, poetry and religion. The oldest inscriptions are on stone, and date apparently as far back as 3600 B.C.<sup>1</sup> Towards 3200 B.C. the clay tablet appears, and from that time on the Sumerians seem to have delighted in the great discovery. It is our good fortune that the people of Mesopotamia wrote not upon fragile, ephemeral paper in fading ink, but upon moist clay deftly impressed with the wedge-like ("cuneiform") point of a stylus. With this malleable material the scribe kept records, executed contracts, drew up official documents, recorded property, judgments and sales, and created a culture in which the stylus became as mighty as the sword. Having completed the writing, the scribe baked the clay tablet with heat or in the sun, and made it thereby a manuscript far more durable than paper, and only less lasting than stone. This development of cuneiform script was the outstanding contribution of Sumeria to the civilizing of mankind.

Sumerian writing reads from right to left; the Babylonians were, so far as we know, the first people to write from left to right. The linear script, as we have seen, was apparently a stylized and conventionalized form of the signs and pictures painted or impressed upon primitive Sumerian pottery.\* Presumably from repetition and haste over centuries of time, the original pictures were gradually contracted into signs so unlike the objects which they had once represented that they became the symbols of sounds rather than of things. We should have an analogous process in English if the picture of a bee should in time be shortened and simplified, and come to mean not a bee but the sound *be*, and then serve to indicate that syllable in any combination as in *be-ing*. The Sumerians and Babylonians never advanced from such representation of syllables to the representation of letters—never dropped the vowel in the syllabic sign to make *be* mean *b*; it seems to have remained for the Egyptians to take this simple but revolutionary step.<sup>28</sup>

The transition from writing to literature probably required many hundreds of years. For centuries writing was a tool of commerce, a matter of contracts and bills, of shipments and receipts; and secondarily, perhaps, it was an instrument of religious record, an attempt to preserve magic formulas, ceremonial procedures, sacred legends, prayers and hymns from alteration or decay. Nevertheless, by 2700 B.C., great libraries had been formed in Sumeria; at Tello, for example, in ruins contemporary with Gudea, De Sarzac discovered a collection of over 30,000 tablets ranged one

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\* Cf. above, p. 104.

upon another in neat and logical array.<sup>66</sup> As early as 2000 B.C. Sumerian historians began to reconstruct the past and record the present for the edification of the future; portions of their work have come down to us not in the original form but as quotations in later Babylonian chronicles. Among the original fragments, however, is a tablet found at Nippur, bearing the Sumerian prototype of the epic of Gilgamesh, which we shall study later in its developed Babylonian expression.<sup>67</sup> Some of the shattered tablets contain dirges of no mean power, and of significant literary form. Here at the outset appears the characteristic Near-Eastern trick of chanting repetition—many lines beginning in the same way, many clauses reiterating or illustrating the meaning of the clause before. Through these salvaged relics we see the religious origin of literature in the songs and lamentations of the priests. The first poems were not madrigals, but prayers.

Behind these apparent beginnings of culture were doubtless many centuries of development, in Sumeria and other lands. Nothing has been created, it has only grown. Just as in writing Sumeria *seems* to have created cuneiform, so in architecture it seems to have created at once the fundamental shapes of home and temple, column and vault and arch.<sup>68</sup> The Sumerian peasant made his cottage by planting reeds in a square, a rectangle or a circle, bending the tops together, and binding them to form an arch, a vault or a dome;<sup>69</sup> this, we surmise, is the simple origin, or earliest known appearance, of these architectural forms. Among the ruins of Nippur is an arched drain 5000 years old; in the royal tombs of Ur there are arches that go back to 3500 B.C., and arched doors were common at Ur 2000 B.C.<sup>70</sup> And these were true arches: i.e., their stones were set in full voussoir fashion—each stone a wedge tapering downward tightly into place.

The richer citizens built palaces, perched on a mound sometimes forty feet above the plain, and made purposely inaccessible except by one path, so that every Sumerian's home might be his castle. Since stone was scarce, these palaces were mostly of brick. The plain red surface of the walls was relieved by *terracotta* decoration in every form—spirals, chevrons, triangles, even lozenges and diapers. The inner walls were plastered and painted in simple mural style. The house was built around a central court, which gave shade and some coolness against the Mediterranean sun; for the same reason, as well as for security, the rooms opened upon this court rather than upon the outer world. Windows were a luxury, or perhaps they were not wanted.

Water was drawn from wells; and an extensive system of drainage drew the waste from the residential districts of the towns. Furniture was not complex or abundant but neither was it without taste. Some beds were inlaid with metal or ivory, and occasionally, as in Egypt, armchairs flaunted feet like lions' claws.<sup>61</sup>

For the temples stone was imported, and adorned with copper entablatures and friezes inlaid with semiprecious material. The temple of Nannar at Ur set a fashion for all Mesopotamia with pale blue enameled tiles; while its interior was paneled with rare woods like cedar and cypress, inlaid with marble, alabaster, onyx, agate and gold. Usually the most important temple in the city was not only built upon an elevation, but was topped with a ziggurat—a tower of three, four or seven stories, surrounded with a winding external stairway, and set back at every stage. Here on the heights the loftiest of the city's gods might dwell, and here the government might find a last spiritual and physical citadel against invasion or revolt.<sup>62</sup>

The temples were sometimes decorated with statuary of animals, heroes and gods; figures plain, blunt and powerful, but severely lacking in sculptural finish and grace. Most of the extant statues are of King Gudea, executed resolutely but crudely in resistant diorite. In the ruins of Tell-el-Ubaid, from the early Sumerian period, a copper statuette of a bull was found, much abused by the centuries, but still full of life and bovine complacency. A cow's head in silver from the grave of Queen Shub-ad at Ur is a masterpiece that suggests a developed art too much despoiled by time to permit of our giving it its due. This is almost proved by the bas-reliefs that survive. The "Stele of the Vultures" set up by King Eannatum of Lagash, the porphyry cylinder of Ibnišhar,<sup>63</sup> the humorous caricatures (as surely they must be) of Ur-nina,<sup>64</sup> and above all the "Victory Stele" of Naram-sin share the crudity of Sumerian sculpture, but have in them a lusty vitality of drawing and action characteristic of a young and flourishing art.

Of the pottery one may not speak so leniently. Perhaps time misleads our judgment by having preserved the worst; perhaps there were many pieces as well carved as the alabaster vessels discovered at Eridu;<sup>65</sup> but for the most part Sumerian pottery, though turned on the wheel, is mere earthenware, and cannot compare with the vases of Elam. Better work was done by the goldsmiths. Vessels of gold, tasteful in design and delicate in finish, have

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\* Such ziggurats have helped American architects to mould a new form for buildings forced by law to set back their upper stories lest they impede their neighbor's light. History suddenly contracts into a brief *coup d'œil* when we contemplate in one glance the brick ziggurats of Sumeria 5000 years old, and the brick ziggurats of contemporary New York.

been found in the earliest graves at Ur, some as old as 4000 B.C.<sup>66</sup> The silver vase of Entemenu, now in the Louvre, is as stocky as Gudca, but is adorned with a wealth of animal imagery finely engraved.<sup>67</sup> Best of all is the gold sheath and lapis-lazuli dagger exhumed at Ur;<sup>68</sup> here, if one may judge from photographs,\* the form almost touches perfection. The ruins have given us a great number of cylindrical seals, mostly made of precious metal or stone, with reliefs carefully carved upon a square inch or two of surface; these seem to have served the Sumerians in place of signatures, and indicate a refinement of life and manners disturbing to our naive conception of progress as a continuous rise of man through the unfortunate cultures of the past to the unrivaled zenith of today.

Sumerian civilization may be summed up in this contrast between crude pottery and consummate jewelry; it was a synthesis of rough beginnings and occasional but brilliant mastery. Here, within the limits of our present knowledge, are the first states and empires, the first irrigation, the first use of gold and silver as standards of value, the first business contracts, the first credit system, the first code of law, the first extensive development of writing, the first stories of the Creation and the Flood, the first libraries and schools, the first literature and poetry, the first cosmetics and jewelry, the first sculpture and bas-relief, the first palaces and temples, the first ornamental metal and decorative themes, the first arch, column, vault and dome. Here, for the first known time on a large scale, appear some of the sins of civilization: slavery, despotism, ecclesiasticism, and imperialistic war. It was a life differentiated and subtle, abundant and complex. Already the natural inequality of men was producing a new degree of comfort and luxury for the strong, and a new routine of hard and disciplined labor for the rest. The theme was struck on which history would strum its myriad variations.

### III. PASSAGE TO EGYPT

#### *Sumerian influence in Mesopotamia—Ancient Arabia—Mesopotamian influence in Egypt*

Nevertheless, we are still so near the beginning of recorded history when we speak of Sumeria that it is difficult to determine the priority or sequence of the many related civilizations that developed in the ancient Near

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\* The original is in the Iraq Museum at Baghdad.

East. The oldest written records known to us are Sumerian; this, which may be a whim of circumstance, a sport of mortality, does not prove that the first civilization was Sumerian. Statuettes and other remains akin to those of Sumeria have been found at Ashur and Samarra, in what became Assyria; we do not know whether this early culture came from Sumeria or passed to it along the Tigris. The code of Hammurabi resembles that of Ur-engur and Dungi, but we cannot be sure that it was evolved from it rather than from some predecessor ancestral to them both. It is only probable, not certain, that the civilizations of Babylonia and Assyria were derived from or fertilized by that of Sumer and Akkad.<sup>60</sup> The gods and myths of Babylon and Nineveh are in many cases modifications or developments of Sumerian theology; and the languages of these later cultures bear the same relationship to Sumeria that French and Italian bear to Latin.

Schweinfurth has called attention to the interesting fact that though the cultivation of barley, millet and wheat, and the domestication of cattle, goats and sheep, appear in both Egypt and Mesopotamia as far back as our records go, these cereals and animals are found in their wild and natural state not in Egypt but in western Asia—especially in Yemen or ancient Arabia. He concludes that civilization—i.e., in this context, the cultivation of cereals and the use of domesticated animals—appeared in unrecorded antiquity in Arabia, and spread thence in a “triangular culture” to Mesopotamia (Sumeria, Babylonia, Assyria) and Egypt.<sup>61</sup> Current knowledge of primitive Arabia is too slight to make this more than a presentable hypothesis.

More definite is the derivation of certain specific elements of Egyptian culture from Sumeria and Babylonia. We know that trade passed between Mesopotamia and Egypt—certainly via the isthmus at Suez, and probably by water from the ancient outlets of Egyptian rivers on the Red Sea.<sup>62</sup> A look at the map explains why Egypt, throughout its known history, has belonged to Western Asia rather than to Africa; trade and culture could pass from Asia along the Mediterranean to the Nile, but shortly beyond that it was balked by the desert which, with the cataracts of the Nile, isolated Egypt from the remainder of Africa. Hence it is natural that we should find many Mesopotamian elements in the primitive culture of Egypt.

The farther back we trace the Egyptian language the more affinities it reveals with the Semitic tongues of the Near East.<sup>63</sup> The pictographic writing of the predynastic Egyptians seems to have come in from Sumeria.<sup>64</sup> The cylindrical seal, which is of unquestionably Mesopotamian origin, appears in the earliest period of known Egyptian history, and then disappears, as if an imported custom had been displaced by a native mode.<sup>65</sup> The potter's wheel is not known in Egypt before the Fourth Dynasty—long after its appearance in Sumeria; presumably it came into Egypt from the Land be-

between the Rivers along with the wheel and the chariot.<sup>76</sup> Early Egyptian and Babylonian mace-heads are completely identical in form.<sup>77</sup> A finely worked flint knife, found in predynastic Egyptian remains at Gebel-el-Arak, bears reliefs in Mesopotamian themes and style.<sup>78</sup> Copper was apparently developed in western Asia, and brought thence to Egypt.<sup>79</sup> Early Egyptian architecture resembles Mesopotamian in the use of the recessed panel as a decoration for brick walls.<sup>80</sup> Predynastic pottery, statuettes and decorative motives are in many cases identical, or unmistakably allied, with Mesopotamian products.<sup>81</sup> Among these early Egyptian remains are small figures of a goddess of evident Asiatic origin. At a time when Egyptian civilization seems to have only begun, the artists of Ur were making statuary and reliefs whose style and conventions demonstrate the antiquity of these arts in Sumeria.<sup>82</sup>

Egypt could well afford to concede the priority of Sumeria. For whatever the Nile may have borrowed from the Tigris and the Euphrates, it soon flowered into a civilization specifically and uniquely its own; one of the richest and greatest, one of the most powerful and yet one of the most graceful, cultures in history. By its side Sumeria was but a crude beginning; and not even Greece or Rome would surpass it.

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\* A great scholar, Elliot Smith, has tried to offset these considerations by pointing out that although barley, millet and wheat are not known in their natural state in Egypt, it is there that we find the oldest signs of their cultivation; and he believes that it was from Egypt that agriculture and civilization came to Sumeria.<sup>83</sup> The greatest of American Egyptologists, Professor Breasted, is similarly unconvinced of the priority of Sumeria. Dr. Breasted believes that the wheel is at least as old in Egypt as in Sumeria, and rejects the hypothesis of Schweinfurth on the ground that cereals have been found in their native state in the highlands of Abyssinia.

## CHAPTER VIII

# Egypt

### I. THE GIFT OF THE NILE

#### 1. *In the Delta*

#### *Alexandria—The Nile—The Pyramids—The Sphinx*

THIS is a perfect harbor. Outside the long breakwater the waves topple over one another roughly; within it the sea is a silver mirror. There, on the little island of Pharos, when Egypt was very old, Sostratus built his great lighthouse of white marble, five hundred feet high, as a beacon to all ancient mariners of the Mediterranean, and as one of the seven wonders of the world. Time and the nagging waters have washed it away, but a new lighthouse has taken its place, and guides the steamer through the rocks to the quays of Alexandria. Here that astonishing boy-statesman, Alexander, founded the subtle, polyglot metropolis that was to inherit the culture of Egypt, Palestine and Greece. In this harbor Cæsar received without gladness the severed head of Pompey.

As the train glides through the city, glimpses come of unpaved alleys and streets, heat waves dancing in the air, workingmen naked to the waist, black-garbed women bearing burdens sturdily, white-robed and turbaned Moslems of regal dignity, and in the distance spacious squares and shining palaces, perhaps as fair as those that the Ptolemies built when Alexandria was the meeting-place of the world. Then suddenly it is open country, and the city recedes into the horizon of the fertile Delta—that green triangle which looks on the map like the leaves of a lofty palm-tree held up on the slender stalk of the Nile.

Once, no doubt, this Delta was a bay; patiently the broad stream filled it up, too slowly to be seen, with detritus carried down a thousand miles;\* now from this little corner of mud, enclosed by the many mouths of the river, six million peasants grow enough cotton to export a hundred million dollars' worth of it every year. There, bright and calm under the

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\* Even the ancient geographers (e.g., Strabo<sup>1</sup>) believed that Egypt had once been under the waters of the Mediterranean, and that its deserts had been the bottom of the sea.



glaring sun, fringed with slim palms and grassy banks, is the most famous of all rivers. We cannot see the desert that lies so close beyond it, or the great empty *wadis*—river-beds—where once its fertile tributaries flowed; we cannot realize yet how precariously narrow a thing this Egypt is, owing everything to the river, and harassed on either side with hostile, shifting sand.

Now the train passes amid the alluvial plain. The land is half covered with water, and crossed everywhere with irrigation canals. In the ditches and the fields black *fellabeen*\* labor, knowing no garment but a cloth about the loins. The river has had one of its annual inundations, which begin at the summer solstice and last for a hundred days; through that overflow the desert became fertile, and Egypt blossomed, in Herodotus' phrase, as the "gift of the Nile." It is clear why civilization found here one of its earliest homes; nowhere else was a river so generous in irrigation, and so controllable in its rise; only Mesopotamia could rival it. For thousands of years the peasants have watched this rise with anxious eagerness; to this day public criers announce its progress each morning in the streets of Cairo.<sup>2</sup> So the past, with the quiet continuity of this river, flows into the future, lightly touching the present on its way. Only historians make divisions; time does not.

But every gift must be paid for; and the peasant, though he valued the rising waters, knew that without control they could ruin as well as irrigate his fields. So from time beyond history he built these ditches that cross and recross the land; he caught the surplus in canals, and when the river fell he raised the water with buckets pivoted on long poles, singing, as he worked, the songs that the Nile has heard for five thousand years. For as these peasants are now, sombre and laughterless even in their singing, so they have been, in all likelihood, for fifty centuries.\* This water-raising apparatus is as old as the Pyramids; and a million of these *fellabeen*, despite the conquests of Arabic, still speak the language of the ancient monuments.\*

Here in the Delta, fifty miles southwest of Alexandria, is the site of Naucratis, once filled with industrious, scheming Greeks; thirty miles farther east, the site of Saïs, where, in the centuries before the Persian and Greek conquests, the native civilization of Egypt had its last revival; and then, a hundred and twenty-nine miles southeast of Alexandria, is Cairo. A beautiful city, but not Egyptian; the conquering Moslems

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\* Plural form of the Arabic *fellah*, peasant; from *felaha*, to plough.

founded it in A.D. 968; then the bright spirit of France overcame the gloomy Arab and built here a Paris in the desert, exotic and unreal. One must pass through it by motorcar or leisurely *fiacre* to find old Egypt at the Pyramids.

How small they appear from the long road that approaches them; did we come so far to see so little? But then they grow larger, as if they were being lifted up into the air; round a turn in the road we surprise the edge of the desert; and there suddenly the Pyramids confront us, bare and solitary in the sand, gigantic and morose against an Italian sky. A motley crowd scrambles about their base—stout business men on blinking donkeys, stouter ladies secure in carts, young men prancing on horseback, young women sitting uncomfortably on camel-back, their silk knees glistening in the sun; and everywhere grasping Arabs. We stand where Cæsar and Napoleon stood, and remember that fifty centuries look down upon us; where the Father of History came four hundred years before Cæsar, and heard the tales that were to startle Pericles. A new perspective of time comes to us; two millenniums seem to fall out of the picture, and Cæsar, Herodotus and ourselves appear for a moment contemporary and modern before these tombs that were more ancient to them than the Greeks are to us.

Nearby, the Sphinx, half lion and half philosopher, grimly claws the sand, and glares unmoved at the transient visitor and the eternal plain. It is a savage monument, as if designed to frighten old lechers and make children retire early. The lion body passes into a human head with prognathous jaws and cruel eyes; the civilization that built it (ca. 2990 B.C.) had not quite forgotten barbarism. Once the sand covered it, and Herodotus, who saw so much that is not there, says not a word of it.

Nevertheless, what wealth these old Egyptians must have had, what power and skill, even in the infancy of history, to bring these vast stones six hundred miles, to raise some of them, weighing many tons, to a height of half a thousand feet, and to pay, or even to feed, the hundred thousand slaves who toiled for twenty years on these Pyramids! Herodotus has preserved for us an inscription that he found on one pyramid, recording the quantity of radishes, garlic and onions consumed by the workmen who built it; these things, too, had to have their immortality.\* Despite

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\* Diodorus Siculus, who must always be read sceptically, writes: "An inscription on the larger pyramid . . . sets forth that on vegetables and purgatives for the workmen there were paid out over 1600 talents"—i.e., \$16,000,000."

these familiar friends we go away disappointed; there is something barbarically primitive—or barbarically modern—in this brute hunger for size. It is the memory and imagination of the beholder that, swollen with history, make these monuments great; in themselves they are a little ridiculous—vainglorious tombs in which the dead sought eternal life. Perhaps pictures have too much ennobled them: photography can catch everything but dirt, and enhances man-made objects with noble vistas of land and sky. The sunset at Gizeh is greater than the Pyramids.

## 2. Upstream

*Memphis—The masterpiece of Queen Hatshepsut—The “Colossi of Menmon”—Luxor and Karnak—The grandeur of Egyptian civilization*

From Cairo a little steamer moves up the river—i.e., southward—through six leisurely days to Karnak and Luxor. Twenty miles below Cairo it passes Memphis, the most ancient of Egypt's capitals. Here, where the great Third and Fourth Dynasties lived, in a city of two million souls, nothing now greets the eye but a row of small pyramids and a grove of palms; for the rest there is only desert, infinite, villainous sand, slipping under the feet, stinging the eyes, filling the pores, covering everything, stretching from Morocco across Sinai, Arabia, Turkestan, Tibet to Mongolia: along that sandy belt across two continents civilization once built its seats and now is gone, driven away, as the ice receded, by increasing heat and decreasing rain. By the Nile, for a dozen miles on either side, runs a ribbon of fertile soil; from the Mediterranean to Nubia there is only this strip redeemed from the desert. This is the thread upon which hung the life of Egypt. And yet how brief seems the life-span of Greece, or the millennium of Rome, beside the long record from Menes to Cleopatra!

A week later the steamer is at Luxor. On this site, now covered with Arab hamlets or drifting sand, once stood the greatest of Egypt's capitals, the richest city of the very ancient world, known to the Greeks as Thebes, and to its own people as Wesi and Ne. On the eastern slope of the Nile is the famous Winter Palace of Luxor, aflame with bougainvillea; across the river the sun is setting over the Tombs of the Kings into a sea of sand, and the sky is flaked with gaudy tints of purple and gold. Far in the west the pillars of Queen Hatshepsut's noble temple gleam, looking for all the world like some classic colonnade.

In the morning lazy sailboats ferry the seeker across a river so quiet and unpretentious that no one would suspect that it had been flowing here for uncounted centuries. Then over mile after mile of desert, through dusty mountain passes and by historic graves, until the masterpiece of the great Queen rises still and white in the trembling heat. Here the artist decided to transform nature and her hills into a beauty greater than her own: into the very face of the granite cliff he built these columns, as stately as those that Ictinus made for Pericles; it is impossible, seeing these, to doubt that Greece took her architecture, perhaps through Crete, from this initiative race. And on the walls vast bas-reliefs, alive with motion and thought, tell the story of the first great woman in history, and not the least of queens.

On the road back sit two giants in stone, representing the most luxurious of Egypt's monarchs, Amenhotep III, but mistakenly called the "Colossi of Memnon" by the Baedekers of Greece. Each is seventy feet high, weighs seven hundred tons, and is carved out of a single rock. On the base of one of them are the inscriptions left by Greek tourists who visited these ruins two thousand years ago; again the centuries fall out of reckoning, and those Greeks seem strangely contemporary with us in the presence of these ancient things. A mile to the north lie the stone remains of Rameses II, one of the most fascinating figures in history, beside whom Alexander is an immature trifle; alive for ninety-nine years, emperor for sixty-seven, father of one hundred and fifty children; here he is a statue, once fifty-six feet high, now fifty-six feet long, prostrate and ridiculous in the sand. Napoleon's savants measured him zealously; they found his ear three and a half feet long, his foot five feet wide, his weight a thousand tons; for him Bonaparte should have used his later salutation of Goethe: "*Voilà un homme!*—behold a man!"

All around now, on the west bank of the Nile, is the City of the Dead. At every turn some burrowing Egyptologist has unearthed a royal tomb. The grave of Tutenkhamon is closed, locked even in the faces of those who thought that gold would open anything; but the tomb of Seti I is open, and there in the cool earth one may gaze at decorated ceilings and passages, and marvel at the wealth and skill that could build such sarcophagi and surround them with such art. In one of these tombs the excavators saw, on the sand, the footprints of the slaves who had carried the mummy to its place three thousand years before.<sup>a</sup>

But the best remains adorn the eastern side of the river. Here at Luxor the lordly Amenhotep III, with the spoils of Thutmose III's victories, began to build his most pretentious edifice; death came upon him as he built; then, after the work had been neglected for a century, Rameses II finished it in regal style. At once the quality of Egyptian architecture floods the spirit: here are scope and power, not beauty merely, but a masculine sublimity. A wide court, now waste with sand, paved of old with marble; on three sides majestic colonnades matched by Karnak alone; on every hand carved stone in bas-relief, and royal statues proud even in desolation. Imagine eight long stems of the papyrus plant—nurse of letters and here the form of art; at the base of the fresh unopened flowers bind the stems with five firm bands that will give beauty strength; then picture the whole stately stalk in stone: this is the papyriform column of Luxor. Fancy a court of such columns, upholding massive entablatures and shade-giving porticoes; see the whole as the ravages of thirty centuries have left it; then estimate the men who, in what we once thought the childhood of civilization, could conceive and execute such monuments.

Through ancient ruins and modern squalor a rough footpath leads to what Egypt keeps as its final offering—the temples of Karnak. Half a hundred Pharaohs took part in building them, from the last dynasties of the Old Kingdom to the days of the Ptolemies; generation by generation the structures grew, until sixty acres were covered with the lordliest offerings that architecture ever made to the gods. An "Avenue of Sphinxes" leads to the place where Champollion, founder of Egyptology, stood in 1828 and wrote:

I went at last to the palace, or rather to the city of monuments—to Karnak. There all the magnificence of the Pharaohs appeared to me, all that men have imagined and executed on the grandest scale. . . . No people, ancient or modern, has conceived the art of architecture on a scale so sublime, so great, so grandiose, as the ancient Egyptians. They conceived like men a hundred feet high.'

To understand it would require maps and plans, and all an architect's learning. A spacious enclosure of many courts one-third of a mile on each side; a population of once 86,000 statues;<sup>9</sup> a main group of buildings, constituting the Temple of Amon, one thousand by three hundred feet; great pylons or gates between one court and the next; the perfect "Heraldic

Pillars" of Thutmose III, broken off rudely at the top, but still of astonishingly delicate carving and design; the Festival Hall of the same formidable monarch, its fluted shafts here and there anticipating all the power of the Doric column in Greece; the little Temple of Ptah, with graceful pillars rivaling the living palms beside them; the Promenade, again the work of Thutmose's builders, with bare and massive colonnades, symbol of Egypt's Napoleon; above all, the Hypostyle Hall, a very forest of one hundred and forty gigantic columns, crowded close to keep out the exhausting sun, flowering out at their tops into spreading palms of stone, and holding up, with impressive strength, a roof of mammoth slabs stretched in solid granite from capital to capital. Nearby two slender obelisks, monoliths complete in symmetry and grace, rise like pillars of light amid the ruins of statues and temples, and announce in their inscriptions the proud message of Queen Hatshepsut to the world. These obelisks, the carving says,

are of hard granite from the quarries of the South; their tops are of fine gold chosen from the best in all foreign lands. They can be seen from afar on the river; the splendor of their radiance fills the Two Lands, and when the solar disc appears between them it is truly as if he rose up into the horizon of the sky. . . . You who after long years shall see these monuments, who shall speak of what I have done, you will say, "We do not know, we do not know how they can have made a whole mountain of gold." . . . To guild them I have given gold measured by the bushel, as though it were sacks of grain, . . . for I knew that Karnak is the celestial horizon of the earth.\*

What a queen, and what kings! Perhaps this first great civilization was the finest of all, and we have but begun to uncover its glory? Near the Sacred Lake at Karnak men are digging, carrying away the soil patiently in little paired baskets slung over the shoulder on a pole; an Egyptologist is bending absorbed over hieroglyphics on two stones just rescued from the earth; he is one of a thousand such men, Carters and Breasteds and Masperos, Petries and Caparts and Weigalls, living simply here in the heat and dust, trying to read for us the riddle of the Sphinx, to snatch from the secretive soil the art and literature, the history and wisdom of Egypt.

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\* A model of this can be seen at the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

Every day the earth and the elements fight against them; superstition curses and hampers them; moisture and corrosion attack the very monuments they have exhumed; and the same Nile that gives food to Egypt creeps in its overflow into the ruins of Karnak, loosens the pillars, tumbles them down,\* and leaves upon them, when it subsides, a deposit of saltpetre that eats like a leprosy into the stone.

Let us contemplate the glory of Egypt once more, in her history and her civilization, before her last monuments crumble into the sand.

## II. THE MASTER BUILDERS

### 1. *The Discovery of Egypt*

#### *Champollion and the Rosetta Stone*

The recovery of Egypt is one of the most brilliant chapters in archeology. The Middle Ages knew of Egypt as a Roman colony and a Christian settlement; the Renaissance presumed that civilization had begun with Greece; even the Enlightenment, though it concerned itself intelligently with China and India, knew nothing of Egypt beyond the Pyramids. Egyptology was a by-product of Napoleonic imperialism. When the great Corsican led a French expedition to Egypt in 1798 he took with him a number of draughtsmen and engineers to explore and map the terrain, and made place also for certain scholars absurdly interested in Egypt for the sake of a better understanding of history. It was this corps of men who first revealed the temples of Luxor and Karnak to the modern world; and the elaborate *Description de L'Égypte* (1809-13) which they prepared for the French Academy was the first milestone in the scientific study of this forgotten civilization.<sup>20</sup>

For many years, however, they were unable to read the inscriptions surviving on the monuments. Typical of the scientific temperament was the patient devotion with which Champollion, one of these *savants*, applied himself to the decipherment of the hieroglyphics. He found at last an obelisk covered with such "sacred carvings" in Egyptian, but bearing at the base a Greek inscription which indicated that the writing concerned Ptolemy and Cleopatra. Guessing that two hieroglyphics often repeated, with a royal cartouche attached, were the names of these rulers, he made out tentatively (1822) eleven Egyptian letters; this was the first proof that Egypt had had

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\* On October 3, 1899, eleven columns at Karnak, loosened by the water, fell to the ground.

an alphabet. Then he applied this alphabet to a great black stone slab that Napoleon's troops had stumbled upon near the Rosetta mouth of the Nile. This "Rosetta Stone"\* contained an inscription in three languages: first in hieroglyphics, second in "demotic"—the popular script of the Egyptians—and third in Greek. With his knowledge of Greek, and the eleven letters made out from the obelisk, Champollion, after more than twenty years of labor, deciphered the whole inscription, discovered the entire Egyptian alphabet, and opened the way to the recovery of a lost world. It was one of the peaks in the history of history.†

## 2. Prehistoric Egypt

### *Paleolithic—Neolithic—The Badarians—Predynastic—Race*

Since the radicals of one age are the reactionaries of the next, it was not to be expected that the men who created Egyptology should be the first to accept as authentic the remains of Egypt's Old Stone Age; after forty *les savants ne sont pas curieux*. When the first flints were unearthed in the valley of the Nile, Sir Flinders Petrie, not usually hesitant with figures, classed them as the work of post-dynastic generations; and Maspero, whose lordly erudition did no hurt to his urbane and polished style, ascribed neolithic Egyptian pottery to the Middle Kingdom. Nevertheless, in 1895 De Morgan revealed an almost continuous gradation of paleolithic cultures—corresponding substantially with their succession in Europe—in the flint hand-axes, harpoons, arrow-heads and hammers exhumed all along the Nile.<sup>30</sup> Imperceptibly the paleolithic remains graduate into neolithic at depths indicating an age 10,000-4000 B.C.<sup>31</sup> The stone tools become more refined, and reach indeed a level of sharpness, finish and precision unequaled by any other neolithic culture known.<sup>32</sup> Towards the end of the period metal work enters in the form of vases, chisels and pins of copper, and ornaments of silver and gold.<sup>33</sup>

Finally, as a transition to history, agriculture appears. In the year 1901, near the little town of Badari (half way between Cairo and Karnak), bodies were excavated amid implements indicating a date approximating to forty centuries before Christ. In the intestines of these bodies, preserved through six millenniums by the dry heat of the sand, were husks of unconsumed barley.<sup>34</sup> Since barley does not grow wild in Egypt, it is presumed that the Badarians had learned to cultivate cereals. From that early age the in-

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\* Now in the British Museum.

† The Swedish diplomat Akerblad in 1802, and the versatile English physicist Thomas Young in 1814, had helped by partly deciphering the Rosetta Stone.<sup>35</sup>



habitants of the Nile valley began the work of irrigation, cleared the jungles and the swamps, won the river from the crocodile and the hippopotamus, and slowly laid the groundwork of civilization.

These and other remains give us some inkling of Egyptian life before the first of the historic dynasties. It was a culture midway between hunting and agriculture, and just beginning to replace stone with metal tools. The people made boats, ground corn, wove linen and carpets, had jewels and perfumes, barbers and domesticated animals, and delighted to draw pictures, chiefly of the prey they pursued.<sup>18</sup> They painted upon their simple pottery figures of mourning women, representations of animals and men, and geometrical designs; and they carved such excellent products as the Gebel-el-Arak knife. They had pictographic writing, and Sumerian-like cylinder seals.<sup>19</sup>

No one knows whence these early Egyptians came. Learned guesses incline to the view that they were a cross between Nubian, Ethiopian and Libyan natives on one side and Semitic or Armenoid immigrants on the other;<sup>20</sup> even at that date there were no pure races on the earth. Probably the invaders or immigrants from Western Asia brought a higher culture with them,<sup>21</sup> and their intermarriage with the vigorous native stocks provided that ethnic blend which is often the prelude to a new civilization. Slowly, from 4000 to 3000 B.C., these mingling groups became a people, and created the Egypt of history.

### 3. The Old Kingdom

*The "nomes"—The first historic individual—"Cheops"—"Chephren"—The purpose of the Pyramids—Art of the tombs—Mummification*

Already, by 4000 B.C., these peoples of the Nile had forged a form of government. The population along the river was divided into "nomes,"<sup>\*</sup> in each of which the inhabitants were essentially of one stock, acknowledged the same totem, obeyed the same chief, and worshiped the same gods by the same rites. Throughout the history of ancient Egypt these nomes persisted, their "nomarchs" or rulers having more or less power and autonomy according to the weakness or strength of the reigning Pharaoh. As all developing structures tend toward an increasing interdependence of the parts, so in this case the growth of trade and the rising

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<sup>\*</sup> So called by the Greeks from their word for law (*nomos*).

costliness of war forced the nomes to organize themselves into two kingdoms—one in the south, one in the north; a division probably reflecting the conflict between African natives and Asiatic immigrants. This dangerous accentuation of geographic and ethnic differences was resolved for a time when Menes, a half-legendary figure, brought the "Two Lands" under his united power, promulgated a body of laws given him by the god Thoth,<sup>22</sup> established the first historic dynasty, built a new capital at Memphis, "taught the people" (in the words of an ancient Greek historian) "to use tables and couches, and . . . introduced luxury and an extravagant manner of life."<sup>23</sup>

The first real person in known history is not a conqueror or a king but an artist and a scientist—Imhotep, physician, architect and chief adviser of King Zoser (ca. 3150 B.C.). He did so much for Egyptian medicine that later generations worshiped him as a god of knowledge, author of their sciences and their arts; and at the same time he appears to have founded the school of architecture which provided the next dynasty with the first great builders in history. It was under his administration, according to Egyptian tradition, that the first stone house was built; it was he who planned the oldest Egyptian structure extant—the Step-Pyramid of Sakkara, a terraced structure of stone which for centuries set the style in tombs; and apparently it was he who designed the funerary temple of Zoser, with its lovely lotus columns and its limestone paneled walls.<sup>24</sup> In these old remains at Sakkarah, at what is almost the beginning of historic Egyptian art, we find fluted shafts as fair as any that Greece would build,<sup>25</sup> reliefs full of realism and vitality,<sup>26</sup> green *faïence*—richly colored glazed earthenware—rivaling the products of medieval Italy,<sup>27</sup> and a powerful stone figure of King Zoser himself, obscured in its details by the blows of time, but still revealing an astonishingly subtle and sophisticated face.<sup>28</sup>

We do not know what concourse of circumstance made the Fourth Dynasty the most important in Egyptian history before the Eighteenth. Perhaps it was the lucrative mining operations in the last reign of the Third, perhaps the ascendancy of Egyptian merchants in Mediterranean trade, perhaps the brutal energy of Khufu,\* first Pharaoh of the new house. Herodotus has passed on to us the traditions of the Egyptian priests concerning this builder of the first of Gizeh's pyramids:

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\* The "Cheops" of Herodotus, c. 3008-75 B.C.

Now they tell me that to the reign of Rhampsinitus there was a perfect distribution of justice and that all Egypt was in a high state of prosperity; but that after him Cheops, coming to reign over them, plunged into every kind of wickedness, for that, having shut up all the temples, . . . he ordered all the Egyptians to work for himself. Some, accordingly, were appointed to draw stones from the quarries in the Arabian mountains down to the Nile, others he ordered to receive the stones when transported in vessels across the river. . . . And they worked to the number of a hundred thousand men at a time, each party during three months. The time during which the people were thus harassed by toil lasted ten years on the road which they constructed, and along which they drew the stones; a work, in my opinion, not much less than the Pyramid."

Of his successor and rival builder, Khafre,\* we know something almost at first hand; for the diorite portrait which is among the treasures of the Cairo Museum pictures him, if not as he looked, certainly as we might conceive this Pharaoh of the second pyramid, who ruled Egypt for fifty-six years. On his head is the falcon, symbol of the royal power; but even without that sign we should know that he was every inch a king. Proud, direct, fearless, piercing eyes; a powerful nose and a frame of reserved and quiet strength; it is evident that nature had long since learned how to make men, and art had long since learned how to represent them.

Why did these men build pyramids? Their purpose was not architectural but religious; the pyramids were tombs, lineally descended from the most primitive of burial mounds. Apparently the Pharaoh believed, like any commoner among his people, that every living body was inhabited by a double, or *ka*, which need not die with the breath; and that the *ka* would survive all the more completely if the flesh were preserved against hunger, violence and decay. The pyramid, by its height,† its form and its position, sought stability as a means to deathlessness; and except for its square corners it took the natural form that any homogeneous group of solids would take if allowed to fall unimpeded to the earth. Again, it was to have permanence and strength; therefore stones were piled up here with mad patience as if they had grown by the wayside and had not been carried from quarries hundreds of miles away. In Khufu's pyramid there

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\* The "Chephren" of Herodotus, r. 3067-11 B.C.

† The word *pyramid* is apparently derived from the Egyptian word *pi-ra-mus*, altitude, rather than from the Greek *pyr*, fire.

are two and a half million blocks, some of them weighing one hundred and fifty tons,<sup>20</sup> all of them averaging two and a half tons; they cover half a million square feet, and rise 481 feet into the air. And the mass is solid; only a few blocks were omitted, to leave a secret passage way for the carcass of the King. A guide leads the trembling visitor on all fours into the cavernous mausoleum, up a hundred crouching steps to the very heart of the pyramid; there in the damp, still center, buried in darkness and secrecy, once rested the bones of Khufu and his queen. The marble sarcophagus of the Pharaoh is still in place, but broken and empty. Even these stones could not deter human thievery, nor all the curses of the gods.

Since the *ka* was conceived as the minute image of the body, it had to be fed, clothed and served after the death of the frame. Lavatories were provided in some royal tombs for the convenience of the departed soul; and a funerary text expresses some anxiety lest the *ka*, for want of food, should feed upon its own *excreta*.<sup>21</sup> One suspects that Egyptian burial customs, if traced to their source, would lead to the primitive interment of a warrior's weapons with his corpse, or to some institution like the Hindu *suttee*—the burial of a man's wives and slaves with him that they may attend to his needs. This having proved irksome to the wives and slaves, painters and sculptors were engaged to draw pictures, carve bas-reliefs, and make statuettes resembling these aides; by a magic formula, usually inscribed upon them, the carved or painted objects would be quite as effective as the real ones. A man's descendants were inclined to be lazy and economical, and even if he had left an endowment to cover the costs they were apt to neglect the rule that religion originally put upon them of supplying the dead with provender. Hence pictorial substitutes were in any case a wise precaution: they could provide the *ka* of the deceased with fertile fields, plump oxen, innumerable servants and busy artisans, at an attractively reduced rate. Having discovered this principle, the artist accomplished marvels with it. One tomb picture shows a field being ploughed, the next shows the grain being reaped or threshed, another the bread being baked; one shows the bull copulating with the cow, another the calf being born, another the grown cattle being slaughtered, another the meat served hot on the dish.<sup>22</sup> A fine limestone bas-relief in the tomb of Prince Rahotep portrays the dead man enjoying the varied victuals on the table before him.<sup>23</sup> Never since has art done so much for men

Finally the *ka* was assured long life not only by burying the cadaver in a sarcophagus of the hardest stone, but by treating it to the most painstaking mummification. So well was this done that to this day bits of hair and flesh cling to the royal skeletons. Herodotus vividly describes the Egyptian embalmer's art:

First they draw out the brains through the nostrils with an iron hook, raking part of it out in this manner, the rest by the infusion of drugs. Then with a sharp stone they make an incision in the side, and take out all the bowels; and having cleansed the abdomen and rinsed it with palm wine, they next sprinkle it with pounded perfume. Then, having filled the belly with pure myrrh, cassia and other perfumes, they sew it up again; and when they have done this they steep it in natron,\* leaving it under for seventy days; for a longer time than this it is not lawful to steep it. At the expiration of seventy days they wash the corpse, and wrap the whole body in bandages of waxen cloth, smearing it with gum, which the Egyptians commonly use instead of glue. After this the relations, having taken the body back again, make a wooden case in the shape of a man, and having made it they enclose the body; and then, having fastened it up, they store it in a sepulchral chamber, setting it upright against the wall. In this manner they prepare the bodies that are embalmed in the most expensive way.<sup>24</sup>

"All the world fears Time," says an Arab proverb, "but Time fears the Pyramids."<sup>25</sup> However, the pyramid of Khufu has lost twenty feet of its height, and all its ancient marble casing is gone; perhaps Time is only leisurely with it. Beside it stands Khafre's pyramid, a trifle smaller, but still capped with the granite casing that once covered it all. Humbly beyond this squats the pyramid of Khafre's successor Menkaure,† covered not with granite but with shamefaced brick, as if to announce that when men raised it the zenith of the Old Kingdom had passed. The statues of Menkaure that have come down to us show him as a man more refined and less forceful than Khafre.‡ Civilization, like life, destroys what it has perfected. Already, it may be, the growth of comforts and luxuries, the

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\* A silicate of sodium and aluminum:  $\text{Na}_2\text{Al}_2\text{Si}_2\text{O}_{10}\cdot 2\text{H}_2\text{O}$ .

† The "Mycerinus" of Herodotus, c. 3011-2988 B.C.

‡ Cf. the statues of Menkaure and his consort in the Metropolitan Museum of Art, New York.

progress of manners and morals, had made men lovers of peace and haters of war. Suddenly a new figure appeared, usurped Menkaure's throne, and put an end to the pyramid-builders' dynasty.

#### 4. *The Middle Kingdom*

##### *The Feudal Age—The Twelfth Dynasty—The Hyksos Domination*

Kings were never so plentiful as in Egypt. History lumps them into dynasties—monarchs of one line or family; but even then they burden the memory intolerably.\* One of these early Pharaohs, Pepi II, ruled Egypt for ninety-four years (2738-2644 B.C.)—the longest reign in history. When he died anarchy and dissolution ensued, the Pharaohs lost control, and feudal barons ruled the nomes independently: this alternation between centralized and decentralized power is one of the cyclical rhythms of history, as if men tired alternately of immoderate liberty and excessive order. After a Dark Age of four chaotic centuries a strong-willed Charlemagne arose, set things severely in order, changed the capital from Memphis to Thebes, and under the title of Amenemhet I inaugurated that Twelfth Dynasty during which all the arts, excepting perhaps architecture, reached a height of excellence never equaled in known Egypt before or again. Through an old inscription Amenemhet speaks to us:

I was one who cultivated grain and loved the harvest god;  
The Nile greeted me and every valley;  
None was hungry in my years, none thirsted then;  
Men dwelt in peace through that which I wrought, and conversed  
of me.

His reward was a conspiracy among the Talleyrands and Fouchés whom he had raised to high office. He put it down with a mighty hand, but left for his son, Polonius-like, a scroll of bitter counsel—an admirable formula for despotism, but a heavy price to pay for royalty:

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\* Historians have helped themselves by further grouping the dynasties into periods: (1) *The Old Kingdom*, Dynasties I-VI (3500-2631 B.C.), followed by an interlude of chaos; (2) *The Middle Kingdom*, Dynasties XI-XIV (2375-1800 B.C.), followed by another chaotic interlude; (3) *The Empire*, Dynasties XVIII-XX (1580-1100 B.C.), followed by a period of divided rule from rival capitals; and (4) *The Saite Age*, Dynasty XXVI, 663-525. All these dates except the last are approximate, and Egyptologists amuse themselves by moving the earlier ones up and down by centuries.

Hearken to that which I say to thee,  
That thou mayest be king of the earth, . . .  
That thou mayest increase good:  
Harden thyself against all subordinates—  
The people give heed to him who terrorizes them;  
Approach them not alone.  
Fill not thy heart with a brother,  
Know not a friend; . . .  
When thou sleepest, guard for thyself thine own heart;  
For a man hath no friend in the day of evil.<sup>30</sup>

This stern ruler, who seems to us so human across four thousand years, established a system of administration that held for half a millennium. Wealth grew again, and then art; Senusret I built a great canal from the Nile to the Red Sea, repelled Nubian invaders, and erected great temples at Heliopolis, Abydos, and Karnak; ten colossal seated figures of him have cheated time, and litter the Cairo Museum. Another Senusret—the Third—began the subjugation of Palestine, drove back the recurrent Nubians, and raised a stele or slab at the southern frontier, "not from any desire that ye should worship it, but that ye should fight for it."<sup>31</sup> Amenemhet III, a great administrator, builder of canals and irrigation, put an end (perhaps too effectively) to the power of the barons, and replaced them with appointees of the king. Thirteen years after his death Egypt was plunged into disorder by a dispute among rival claimants to the throne, and the Middle Kingdom ended in two centuries of turmoil and disruption. Then the Hyksos, nomads from Asia, invaded disunited Egypt, set fire to the cities, razed the temples, squandered the accumulated wealth, destroyed much of the accumulated art, and for two hundred years subjected the Nile valley to the rule of the "Shepherd Kings." Ancient civilizations were little isles in a sea of barbarism, prosperous settlements surrounded by hungry, envious and warlike hunters and herders; at any moment the wall of defense might be broken down. So the Kassites raided Babylonia, the Gauls attacked Greece and Rome, the Huns overran Italy, the Mongols came down upon Peking.

Soon, however, the conquerors in their turn grew fat and prosperous, and lost control; the Egyptians rose in a war of liberation, expelled the Hyksos, and established that Eighteenth Dynasty which was to lift Egypt to greater wealth, power and glory than ever before.

### 5. *The Empire*

#### *The great queen—Thutmose III—The zenith of Egypt*

Perhaps the invasion had brought another rejuvenation by the infusion of fresh blood; but at the same time the new age marked the beginning of a thousand-year struggle between Egypt and Western Asia. Thutmose I not only consolidated the power of the new empire, but—on the ground that western Asia must be controlled to prevent further interruptions—invaded Syria, subjugated it from the coast to Carchemish, put it under guard and tribute, and returned to Thebes laden with spoils and the glory that always comes from the killing of men. At the end of his thirty-year reign he raised his daughter Hatshepsut to partnership with him on the throne. For a time her husband and step-brother ruled as Thutmose II, and dying, named as his successor Thutmose III, son of Thutmose I by a concubine.<sup>38</sup> But Hatshepsut set this high-destined youngster aside, assumed full royal powers, and proved herself a king in everything but gender.

Even this exception was not conceded by her. Since sacred tradition required that every Egyptian ruler should be a son of the great god Amon, Hatshepsut arranged to be made at once male and divine. A biography was invented for her by which Amon had descended upon Hatshepsut's mother Ahmase in a flood of perfume and light; his attentions had been gratefully received; and on his departure he had announced that Ahmase would give birth to a daughter in whom all the valor and strength of the god would be made manifest on earth.<sup>39</sup> To satisfy the prejudices of her people, and perhaps the secret desire of her heart, the great Queen had herself represented on the monuments as a bearded and breastless warrior; and though the inscriptions referred to her with the feminine pronoun, they did not hesitate to speak of her as "Son of the Sun" and "Lord of the Two Lands." When she appeared in public she dressed in male garb, and wore a beard.<sup>40</sup>

She had a right to determine her own sex, for she became one of the most successful and beneficent of Egypt's many rulers. She maintained internal order without undue tyranny, and external peace without loss. She organized a great expedition to Punt (presumably the eastern coast of Africa), giving new markets to her merchants and new delicacies to her people. She helped to beautify Karnak, raised there two majestic obelisks,



built at Der-el-Bahri the stately temple which her father had designed, and repaired some of the damage that had been done to older temples by the Hyksos kings. "I have restored that which was in ruins," one of her proud inscriptions tells us; "I have raised up that which was unfinished since the Asiatics were in the midst of the Northland, overthrowing that which had been made."<sup>4</sup> Finally she built for herself a secret and ornate tomb among the sand-swept mountains on the western side of the Nile, in what came to be called "The Valley of the Kings' Tombs"; her successors followed her example, until some sixty royal sepulchres had been cut into the hills, and the city of the dead began to rival living Thebes in population. The "West End" in Egyptian cities was the abode of dead aristocrats; to "go west" meant to die.

For twenty-two years the Queen ruled in wisdom and peace; Thutmose III followed with a reign of many wars. Syria took advantage of Hatshepsut's death to revolt; it did not seem likely to the Syrians that Thutmose, a lad of twenty-two, would be able to maintain the empire created by his father. But Thutmose set off in the very year of his accession, marched his army through Kantara and Gaza at twenty miles a day, and confronted the rebel forces at Har-Megiddo (i.e., Mt. Megiddo), a little town so strategically placed between the rival Lebanon ranges on the road from Egypt to the Euphrates that it has been the Ar-mageddon of countless wars from that day to General Allenby's. In the same pass where in 1918 the British defeated the Turks, Thutmose III, 3397 years before, defeated the Syrians and their allies. Then Thutmose marched victorious through western Asia, subduing, taxing and levying tribute, and returned to Thebes in triumph six months after his departure.\*<sup>4</sup>

This was the first of fifteen campaigns in which the irresistible Thutmose made Egypt master of the Mediterranean world. Not only did he conquer, but he organized; everywhere he left doughty garrisons and capable governors. The first man in known history to recognize the importance of sea power, he built a fleet that kept the Near East effectively in leash. The spoils that he seized became the foundation of Egyptian art in the period of the Empire; the tribute that he drained from Syria gave his people an epicurean ease, and created a new class of artists who filled all Egypt with

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\* Allenby took twice as long to accomplish a similar result; Napoleon, attempting it at Acre, failed.

precious things. We may vaguely estimate the wealth of the new imperial government when we learn that on one occasion the treasury was able to measure out nine thousand pounds of gold and silver alloy.<sup>43</sup> Trade flourished in Thebes as never before; the temples groaned with offerings; and at Karnak the lordly Promenade and Festival Hall rose to the greater glory of god and king. Then the King retired from the battlefield, designed exquisite vases, and gave himself to internal administration. His vizier or prime minister said of him, as tired secretaries were to say of Napoleon: "Lo, His Majesty was one who knew what happened; there was nothing of which he was ignorant; he was the god of knowledge in everything; there was no matter that he did not carry out."<sup>44</sup> He passed away after a rule of thirty-two (some say fifty-four) years, having made Egyptian leadership in the Mediterranean world complete.

After him another conqueror, Amenhotep II, subdued again certain idolators of liberty in Syria, and returned to Thebes with seven captive kings, still alive, hanging head downward from the prow of the imperial galley; six of them he sacrificed to Amon with his own hand.<sup>45</sup> Then another Thutmose, who does not count; and in 1412 Amenhotep III began a long reign in which the accumulated wealth of a century of mastery brought Egypt to the acme of her splendor. A fine bust in the British Museum shows him as a man at once of refinement and of strength, able to hold firmly together the empire bequeathed to him, and yet living in an atmosphere of comfort and elegance that might have been envied by Petronius or the Medici. Only the exhuming of Tutenkhamon's relics could make us credit the traditions and records of Amenhotep's riches and luxury. In his reign Thebes was as majestic as any city in history. Her streets crowded with merchants, her markets filled with the goods of the world, her buildings "surpassing in magnificence all those of ancient or modern capitals,"<sup>46</sup> her imposing palaces receiving tribute from an endless chain of vassal states, her massive temples "enriched all over with gold"<sup>47</sup> and adorned with every art, her spacious villas and costly chateaux, her shaded promenades and artificial lakes providing the scene for sumptuous displays of fashion that anticipated Imperial Rome<sup>48</sup>—such was Egypt's capital in the days of her glory, in the reign before her fall.

## III. THE CIVILIZATION OF EGYPT

1. *Agriculture*

Behind these kings and queens were pawns; behind these temples, palaces and pyramids were the workers of the cities and the peasants of the fields.\* Herodotus describes them optimistically as he found them about 450 B.C.

They gather in the fruits of the earth with less labor than any other people, . . . for they have not the toil of breaking up the furrow with the plough, nor of hoeing, nor of any other work which all other men must labor at to obtain a crop of corn; but when the river has come of its own accord and irrigated their fields, and having irrigated them has subsided, then each man sows his own land and turns his swine into it; and when the seed has been trodden into it by the swine he waits for harvest time; then . . . he gathers it in.<sup>46</sup>

As the swine trod in the seed, so apes were tamed and taught to pluck fruit from the trees.<sup>47</sup> And the same Nile that irrigated the fields deposited upon them, in its inundation, thousands of fish in shallow pools; even the same net with which the peasant fished during the day was used around his head at night as a double protection against mosquitoes.<sup>48</sup> Nevertheless it was not he who profited by the bounty of the river. Every acre of the soil belonged to the Pharaoh, and other men could use it only by his kind indulgence; every tiller of the earth had to pay him an annual tax of ten<sup>49</sup> or twenty<sup>50</sup> per cent in kind. Large tracts were owned by the feudal barons or other wealthy men; the size of some of these estates may be judged from the circumstance that one of them had fifteen hundred cows.<sup>51</sup> Cereals, fish and meat were the chief items of diet. One fragment tells the school-boy what he is permitted to eat; it includes thirty-three forms of flesh, forty-eight baked meats, and twenty-four varieties of drink.<sup>52</sup> The rich washed down their meals with wine, the poor with barley beer.<sup>53</sup>

The lot of the peasant was hard. The "free" farmer was subject only to the middleman and the tax-collector, who dealt with him on the most time-honored of economic principles, taking "all that the traffic would

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\* The population of Egypt in the fourth century before Christ is estimated at some 7,000,000 souls.<sup>44</sup>

bear" out of the produce of the land. Here is how a complacent contemporary scribe conceived the life of the men who fed ancient Egypt:

Dost thou not recall the picture of the farmer when the tenth of his grain is levied? Worms have destroyed half the wheat, and the hippopotami have eaten the rest; there are swarms of rats in the fields, the grasshoppers alight there, the cattle devour, the little birds pilfer; and if the farmer loses sight for an instant of what remains on the ground, it is carried off by robbers; moreover, the thongs which bind the iron and the hoe are worn out, and the team has died at the plough. It is then that the scribe steps out of the boat at the landing-place to levy the tithe, and there come the Keepers of the Doors of the (King's) Granary with cudgels, and Negroes with ribs of palm-leaves, crying, "Come now, come!" There is none, and they throw the cultivator full length upon the ground, bind him, drag him to the canal, and fling him in head first; his wife is bound with him, his children are put into chains. The neighbors in the meantime leave him and fly to save their grain.<sup>67</sup>

It is a characteristic bit of literary exaggeration; but the author might have added that the peasant was subject at any time to the *corvée*, doing forced labor for the King, dredging the canals, building roads, tilling the royal lands, or dragging great stones and obelisks for pyramids, temples and palaces. Probably a majority of the laborers in the field were moderately content, accepting their poverty patiently. Many of them were slaves, captured in the wars or bonded for debt; sometimes slave-raids were organized, and women and children from abroad were sold to the highest bidder at home. An old relief in the Leyden Museum pictures a long procession of Asiatic captives passing gloomily into the land of bondage: one sees them still alive on that vivid stone, their hands tied behind their backs or their heads, or thrust through rude handcuffs of wood; their faces empty with the apathy that has known the last despair.

## 2. Industry

*Miners — Manufactures — Workers — Engineers — Transport—  
Postal service—Commerce and finance—Scribes*

Slowly, as the peasants toiled, an economic surplus grew, and food was laid aside for workers in industry and trade. Having no minerals, Egypt

sought them in Arabia and Nubia. The great distances offered no temptation to private initiative, and for many centuries mining was a government monopoly.<sup>88</sup> Copper was mined in small quantities,<sup>89</sup> iron was imported from the Hittites, gold mines were found along the eastern coast, in Nubia, and in every vassal treasury. Diodorus Siculus (56 B.C.) describes Egyptian miners following with lamp and pick the veins of gold in the earth, children carrying up the heavy ore, stone mortars pounding it to bits, old men and women washing the dirt away. We cannot tell to what extent nationalistic exaggeration distorts the famous passage:

The kings of Egypt collect condemned prisoners, prisoners of war and others who, beset by false accusations, have been in a fit of anger thrown into prison. These—sometimes alone, sometimes with their entire family—they send to the gold mines, partly to exact a just vengeance for crimes committed by the condemned, partly to secure for themselves a big revenue through their toil. . . . As these workers can take no care of their bodies, and have not even a garment to hide their nakedness, there is no one who, seeing these luckless people, would not pity them because of the excess of their misery, for there is no forgiveness or relaxation at all for the sick, or the maimed, or the old, or for woman's weakness; but all with blows are compelled to stick to their labor until, worn out, they die in their servitude. Thus the poor wretches even account the future more dreadful than the present because of the excess of their punishment, and look to death as more desirable than life.<sup>90</sup>

In its earliest dynasties Egypt learned the art of fusing copper with tin to make bronze: first, bronze weapons—swords, helmets and shields; then bronze tools—wheels, rollers, levers, pulleys, windlasses, wedges, lathes, screws, drills that bored the toughest diorite stone, saws that cut the massive slabs of the sarcophagi. Egyptian workers made brick, cement and plaster of Paris; they glazed pottery, blew glass, and glorified both with color. They were masters in the carving of wood; they made everything from boats and carriages, chairs and beds, to handsome coffins that almost invited men to die. Out of animal skins they made clothing, quivers, shields and seats; all the arts of the tanner are pictured on the walls of the tombs; and the curved knives represented there in the tanner's hand are used by cobblers to this day.<sup>91</sup> From the papyrus plant Egyptian



FIG. 12—*Diorite head of the Pharaoh Khafre*  
Cairo Museum; photo by Metropolitan Museum of Art



FIG. 13—*The seated Scribe*  
Louvre; photo by Metropolitan Museum of Art

artisans made ropes, mats, sandals and paper. Other workmen developed the arts of enameling and varnishing, and applied chemistry to industry. Still others wove tissues of the subtlest weave in the history of the textile art; specimens of linen woven four thousand years ago show today, despite time's corrosion, "a weave so fine that it requires a magnifying glass to distinguish it from silk; the best work of the modern machine-loom is coarse in comparison with this fabric of the ancient Egyptian hand-loom."<sup>102</sup> "If," says Peschel, "we compare the technical inventory of the Egyptians with our own, it is evident that before the invention of the steam-engine we scarcely excelled them in anything."<sup>103</sup>

The workers were mostly freemen, partly slaves. In general every trade was a caste, as in modern India, and sons were expected to follow and take over the occupations of their fathers.<sup>104</sup> The great wars brought in thousands of captives, making possible the large estates and the triumphs of engineering. *Rameses III* presented 113,000 slaves to the temples during the course of his reign.<sup>105</sup> The free artisans were usually organized for the specific undertaking by a "chief workman" or overseer, who sold their labor as a group and paid them individually. A chalk tablet in the British Museum contains a chief workman's record of forty-three workers, listing their absences and their causes—"ill," or "sacrificing to the the god," or just plain "lazy." Strikes were frequent. Once, their pay being long overdue, the workmen besieged the overseer and threatened him. "We have been driven here by hunger and thirst," they told him; "we have no clothes, we have no oil, we have no food. Write to our lord the Pharaoh on the subject, and write to the governor" (of the nome) "who is over us, that they may give us something for our sustenance."<sup>106</sup> A Greek tradition reports a great revolt in Egypt, in which the slaves captured a province, and held it so long that time, which sanctions everything, gave them legal ownership of it; but of this revolt there is no record in Egyptian inscriptions.<sup>107</sup> It is surprising that a civilization so ruthless in its exploitation of labor should have known—or recorded—so few revolutions.

Egyptian engineering was superior to anything known to the Greeks or Romans, or to Europe before the Industrial Revolution; only our time has excelled it, and we may be mistaken. *Senusret III*, for example, built† a wall twenty-seven miles long to gather into Lake Moeris the waters of

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\* "If any artisan," adds *Diodorus*, "takes part in public affairs he is severely beaten."<sup>108</sup>

† This word, when used in reference to rulers, must always be understood as a euphemism.



the Fayum basin, thereby reclaiming 25,000 acres of marsh land for cultivation, and providing a vast reservoir for irrigation.<sup>70</sup> Great canals were constructed, some from the Nile to the Red Sea; the caisson was used for digging,<sup>71</sup> and obelisks weighing a thousand tons were transported over great distances. If we may credit Herodotus, or judge from later undertakings of the same kind represented in the reliefs of the Eighteenth Dynasty, these immense stones were drawn on greased beams by thousands of slaves, and raised to the desired level on inclined approaches beginning far away.<sup>72</sup> Machinery was rare because muscle was cheap. See, in one relief, eight hundred rowers in twenty-seven boats drawing a barge laden with two obelisks;<sup>73</sup> this is the Eden to which our romantic machine-wreckers would return. Ships a hundred feet long by half a hundred feet wide plied the Nile and the Red Sea, and finally sailed the Mediterranean. On land goods were transported by human muscle, later by donkeys, later by the horse, which probably the Hyksos brought to Egypt; the camel did not appear till Ptolemaic days.<sup>74</sup> The poor man walked, or paddled his simple boat; the rich man rode in sedan-chairs carried by slaves, or later in chariots clumsily made with the weight placed entirely in front of the axle.<sup>75</sup>

There was a regular postal service; an ancient papyrus says, "Write to me by the letter-carrier."<sup>76</sup> Communication, however, was difficult; roads were few and bad, except for the military highway through Gaza to the Euphrates;<sup>77</sup> and the serpentine form of the Nile, which was the main highroad of Egypt, doubled the distance from town to town. Trade was comparatively primitive; most of it was by barter in village bazaars. Foreign commerce grew slowly, restricted severely by the most up-to-date tariff walls; the various kingdoms of the Near East believed strongly in the "protective principle," for customs dues were a mainstay of their royal treasuries. Nevertheless Egypt grew rich by importing raw materials and exporting finished products; Syrian, Cretan and Cypriote merchants crowded the markets of Egypt, and Phœnician galleys sailed up the Nile to the busy wharves of Thebes.<sup>78</sup>

Coinage had not yet developed; payments, even of the highest salaries, were made in goods—corn, bread, yeast, beer, etc. Taxes were collected in kind, and the Pharaoh's treasuries were not a mint of money, but store-houses of a thousand products from the fields and shops. After the influx of precious metals that followed the conquests of Thutmose III, merchants

began to pay for goods with rings or ingots of gold, measured by weight at every transaction; but no coins of definite value guaranteed by the state arose to facilitate exchange. Credit, however, was highly developed; written transfers frequently took the place of barter or payment; scribes were busy everywhere accelerating business with legal documents of exchange, accounting and finance.

Every visitor to the Louvre has seen the statue of the Egyptian scribe, squatting on his haunches, almost completely nude, dressed with a pen behind the ear as reserve for the one he holds in his hand. He keeps record of work done and goods paid, of prices and costs, of profits and loss; he counts the cattle as they move to the slaughter, or corn as it is measured out in sale; he draws up contracts and wills, and makes out his master's income-tax; verily there is nothing new under the sun. He is sedulously attentive and mechanically industrious; he has just enough intelligence not to be dangerous. His life is monotonous, but he consoles himself by writing essays on the hardships of the manual worker's existence, and the princely dignity of those whose food is paper and whose blood is ink.

### 3. Government

#### *The bureaucrats—Law—The vizier—The pharaoh*

With these scribes as a clerical bureaucracy the Pharaoh and the provincial nobles maintained law and order in the state. Ancient slabs show such clerks taking the census, and examining income-tax returns. Through Nilometers that measured the rise of the river, the scribe-officials forecast the size of the harvest, and estimated the government's future revenue; they allotted appropriations in advance to governmental departments, supervised industry and trade, and in some measure achieved, almost at the outset of history, a planned economy regulated by the state.<sup>78</sup>

Civil and criminal legislation were highly developed, and already in the Fifth Dynasty the law of private property and bequest was intricate and precise.<sup>79</sup> As in our own days, there was absolute equality before the law—whenever the contesting parties had equal resources and influence. The oldest legal document in the world is a brief, in the British Museum, presenting to the court a complex case in inheritance. Judges required cases to be pled and answered, reargued and rebutted, not in oratory but in writing—which compares favorably with our windy litigation. Perjury

was punished with death.<sup>80</sup> There were regular courts, rising from local judgment-seats in the nomes to supreme courts at Memphis, Thebes, or Heliopolis.<sup>81</sup> Torture was used occasionally as a midwife to truth;<sup>82</sup> beating with a rod was a frequent punishment, mutilation by cutting off nose or ears, hand or tongue, was sometimes resorted to,<sup>83</sup> or exile to the mines, or death by strangling, empaling, beheading, or burning at the stake; the extreme penalty was to be embalmed alive, to be eaten slowly by an inescapable coating of corrosive natron.<sup>84</sup> Criminals of high rank were saved the shame of public execution by being permitted to kill themselves, as in *samurai* Japan.<sup>85</sup> We find no signs of any system of police; even the standing army—always small because of Egypt's protected isolation between deserts and seas—was seldom used for internal discipline. Security of life and property, and the continuity of law and government, rested almost entirely on the prestige of the Pharaoh, maintained by the schools and the church. No other nation except China has ever dared to depend so largely upon psychological discipline.

It was a well-organized government, with a better record of duration than any other in history. At the head of the administration was the Vizier, who served at once as prime minister, chief justice, and head of the treasury; he was the court of last resort under the Pharaoh himself. A tomb relief shows us the Vizier leaving his house early in the morning to hear the petitions of the poor, "to hear," as the inscription reads, "what the people say in their demands, and to make no distinction between small and great."<sup>86</sup> A remarkable papyrus roll, which comes down to us from the days of the Empire, purports to be the form of address (perhaps it is but a literary invention) with which the Pharaoh installed a new Vizier:

Look to the office of the Vizier; be watchful over all that is done therein. Behold, it is the established support of the whole land. . . . The Vizierate is not sweet; it is bitter. . . . Behold, it is not to show respect-of-persons to princes and councillors; it is not to make for himself slaves of any people. . . . Behold, when a petitioner comes from Upper or Lower Egypt . . . see thou to it that everything is done in accordance with law, that everything is done according to the custom thereof, (giving) to (every man) his right. . . . It is an abomination of the god to show partiality. . . . Look upon him who is known to thee like him who is unknown to thee; and him who is near the King like him who is far from (his House).

Behold, a prince who does this, he shall endure here in this place. . . . The dread of a prince is that he does justice. . . . (Behold the regulation) that is laid upon thee."

The Pharaoh himself was the supreme court; any case might under certain circumstances be brought to him, if the plaintiff was careless of expense. Ancient carvings show us the "Great House" from which he ruled, and in which the offices of the government were gathered; from this Great House, which the Egyptians called *Pero* and which the Jews translated *Pharaoh*, came the title of the emperor. Here he carried on an arduous routine of executive work, sometimes with a schedule as rigorous as Chandragupta's, Louis XIV's or Napoleon's." When he traveled the nobles met him at the feudal frontiers, escorted and entertained him, and gave him presents proportionate to their expectations; one lord, says a proud inscription, gave to Amenhotep II "carriages of silver and gold, statues of ivory and ebony . . . jewels, weapons, and works of art," 680 shields, 140 bronze daggers, and many vases of precious metal." The Pharaoh reciprocated by taking one of the baron's sons to live with him at court—a subtle way of exacting a hostage of fidelity. The oldest of the courtiers constituted a Council of Elders called *Saru*, or The Great Ones, who served as an advisory cabinet to the king." Such counsel was in a sense superfluous, for the Pharaoh, with the help of the priests, assumed divine descent, powers and wisdom; this alliance with the gods was the secret of his prestige. Consequently he was greeted with forms of address always flattering, sometimes astonishing, as when, in *The Story of Sinuhe*, a good citizen hails him: "O long-living King, may the Golden One" (Hathor the goddess) "give life to thy nose."

As became so godlike a person, the Pharaoh was waited upon by a variety of aides, including generals, launderers, bleachers, guardians of the imperial wardrobe, and other men of high degree. Twenty officials collaborated to take care of his toilet: barbers who were permitted only to shave him and cut his hair, hairdressers who adjusted the royal cowl and diadem to his head, manicurists who cut and polished his nails, perfumers who deodorized his body, blackened his eyelids with kohl, and reddened his cheeks and lips with rouge." One tomb inscription describes its occupant as "Overseer of the Cosmetic Box, Overseer of the Cosmetic Pencil, Sandal-Bearer to the King, doing in the matter of the King's sandals to the satisfaction of his Law." So pampered, he tended to degenerate, and some-

times brightened his boredom by manning the imperial barge with young women clad only in network of a large mesh. The luxury of Amenhotep III prepared for the debacle of Ikhnaton.

#### 4. *Morals*

*Royal incest—The harem—Marriage—The position of woman—  
The matriarchate in Egypt—Sexual morality*

The government of the Pharaohs resembled that of Napoleon, even to the incest. Very often the king married his own sister—occasionally his own daughter—to preserve the purity of the royal blood. It is difficult to say whether this weakened the stock. Certainly Egypt did not think so, after several thousand years of experiment; the institution of sister-marriage spread among the people, and as late as the second century after Christ two-thirds of the citizens of Arsinoë were found to be practising the custom.<sup>4</sup> The words *brother* and *sister*, in Egyptian poetry, have the same significance as *lover* and *beloved* among ourselves.<sup>5</sup> In addition to his sisters the Pharaoh had an abundant harem, recruited not only from captive women but from the daughters of the nobles and the gifts of foreign potentates; so Amenhotep III received from a prince of Naharina his eldest daughter and three hundred select maidens.<sup>6</sup> Some of the nobility imitated this tiresome extravagance on a small scale, adjusting their morals to their resources.

For the most part the common people, like persons of moderate income everywhere, contented themselves with monogamy. Family life was apparently as well ordered, as wholesome in moral tone and influence, as in the highest civilizations of our time. Divorce was rare until the decadent dynasties. The husband could dismiss his wife without compensation if he detected her in adultery; if he divorced her for other reasons he was required to turn over to her a substantial share of the family property. The fidelity of the husband—so far as we can fathom such *arcana*—was as painstaking as in any later culture, and the position of woman was more advanced than in most countries today. "No people, ancient or modern," said Max Müller, "has given women so high a legal status as did the inhabitants of the Nile Valley."<sup>7</sup> The monuments picture them eating and drinking in public, going about their affairs in the streets unattended and unharmed, and freely engaging in industry and trade. Greek travel-

ers, accustomed to confine their Xanthippes narrowly, were amazed at this liberty; they jibed at the henpecked husbands of Egypt, and Diodorus Siculus, perhaps with a twinkle in his eye, reported that along the Nile obedience of the husband to the wife was required in the marriage bond<sup>98</sup>—a stipulation not necessary in America. Women held and bequeathed property in their own names; one of the most ancient documents in history is the Third Dynasty will in which the lady Neb-sent transmits her lands to her children.<sup>99</sup> Hatshepsut and Cleopatra rose to be queens, and ruled and ruined like kings.

Sometimes a cynical note is heard in the literature. One ancient moralist warns his readers:

Beware of a woman from abroad, who is not known in her city. Look not upon her when she comes, and know her not. She is like the vortex of deep waters, whose whirling is unfathomable. The woman whose husband is far away, she writes to thee every day. If there is no witness with her she arises and spreads her net. Oh, deadly crime if one hearkens!<sup>100</sup>

But the more characteristically Egyptian tone sounds in Ptah-hotep's instructions to his son:

If thou art successful, and hast furnished thy house, and lovest the wife of thy bosom, then fill her stomach and clothe her back. . . . Make glad her heart during the time thou hast her, for she is a field profitable to its owner. . . . If thou oppose her it will mean thy ruin.<sup>101</sup>

And the Boulak Papyrus admonishes the child with touching wisdom:

Thou shalt never forget thy mother. . . . For she carried thee long beneath her breast as a heavy burden; and after thy months were accomplished she bore thee. Three long years she carried thee upon her shoulder, and gave thee her breast to thy mouth. She nurtured thee, and took no offense from thy uncleanness. And when thou didst enter school, and wast instructed in the writings, daily she stood by the master with bread and beer from the house.<sup>102</sup>

It is likely that this high status of woman arose from the mildly matriarchal character of Egyptian society. Not only was woman full mistress

in the house, but all estates descended in the female line; "even in late times," says Petrie, "the husband made over all his property and future earnings to his wife in his marriage settlement."<sup>103</sup> Men married their sisters not because familiarity had bred romance, but because they wished to enjoy the family inheritance, which passed down from mother to daughter, and they did not care to see this wealth give aid and comfort to strangers.<sup>104</sup> The powers of the wife underwent a slow diminution in the course of time, perhaps through contact with the patriarchal customs of the Hyksos, and through the transit of Egypt from agricultural isolation and peace to imperialism and war; under the Ptolemies the influence of the Greeks was so great that freedom of divorce, claimed in earlier times by the wife, became the exclusive privilege of the husband. Even then, however, the change was accepted only by the upper classes; the Egyptian commoner adhered to matriarchal ways.<sup>105</sup> Possibly because of the mastery of woman over her own affairs, infanticide was rare; Diodorus thought it a peculiarity of the Egyptians that every child born to them was reared, and tells us that parents guilty of infanticide were required by law to hold the dead child in their arms for three days and nights.<sup>106</sup> Families were large, and children swarmed in both hovels and palaces; the well-to-do were hard put to it to keep count of their offspring.<sup>107</sup>

Even in courtship the woman usually took the initiative. The love poems and letters that have come down to us are generally addressed by the lady to the man; she begs for assignations, she presses her suit directly, she formally proposes marriage.<sup>108</sup> "Oh my beautiful friend," says one letter, "my desire is to become, as thy wife, the mistress of all thy possessions."<sup>109</sup> Hence modesty, as distinct from fidelity, was not prominent among the Egyptians; they spoke of sexual affairs with a directness alien to our late morality, adorned their very temples with pictures and bas-reliefs of startling anatomical candor, and supplied their dead with obscene literature to amuse them in the grave.<sup>110</sup> Blood ran warm along the Nile: girls were nubile at ten, and premarital morals were free and easy; one courtesan, in Ptolemaic days, was reputed to have built a pyramid with her savings; even sodomy had its clientele.<sup>111</sup> Dancing-girls, in the manner of Japan, were accepted into the best male society as providers of entertainment and physical edification; they dressed in diaphanous robes, or contented themselves with anklets, bracelets and rings.<sup>112</sup> Evidences occur of religious prostitution on a small scale; as late as the Roman occupa-

tion the most beautiful girl among the noble families of Thebes was chosen to be consecrated to Amon. When she was too old to satisfy the god she received an honorable discharge, married, and moved in the highest circles.<sup>113</sup> It was a civilization with different prejudices from our own.

### 5. *Manners*

#### *Character—Games—Appearance—Cosmetics—Costume—Jewelry*

If we try to visualize the Egyptian character we find it difficult to distinguish between the ethics of the literature and the actual practices of life. Very frequently noble sentiments occur; a poet, for example, counsels his countrymen:

Give bread to him who has no field,  
And create for thyself a good name for ever more;<sup>114</sup>

and some of the elders give very laudable advice to their children. A papyrus in the British Museum, known to scholars as "The Wisdom of Amenemope" (ca. 950 B.C.), prepares a student for public office with admonitions that probably influenced the author or authors of the "Proverbs of Solomon."

Be not greedy for a cubit of land,  
And trespass not on the boundary of the widow. . . .  
Plough the fields that thou mayest find thy needs,  
And receive thy bread from thine own threshing floor.  
Better is a bushel which God giveth to thee  
Than five thousand gained by transgression. . . .  
Better is poverty in the hand of God  
Than riches in the storehouse;  
And better are loaves when the heart is joyous  
Than riches in unhappiness. . . .<sup>115</sup>

Such pious literature did not prevent the normal operation of human greed. Plato described the Athenians as loving knowledge, the Egyptians as loving wealth; perhaps he was too patriotic. In general the Egyptians were the Americans of antiquity: enamored of size, given to gigantic engineering and majestic building, industrious and accumulative, practical even in the midst of many ultramundane superstitions. They were the arch-conservatives of history; the more they changed, the more they remained the same; through forty centuries their artists copied the old conventions religiously. They appear to us, from their monuments, to have been a matter-of-fact people, not given to non-theological nonsense. They had no sentimental regard for



human life, and killed with the clear conscience of nature; Egyptian soldiers cut off the right hand, or the phallus, of a slain enemy, and brought it to the proper scribe that it might be put into the record to their credit.<sup>146</sup> In the later dynasties the people, long accustomed to internal peace and to none but distant wars, lost all military habits and qualities, until at last a few Roman soldiers sufficed to master all Egypt.<sup>147</sup>

The accident that we know them chiefly from the remains in their tombs or the inscriptions on their temples has misled us into exaggerating their solemnity. We perceive from some of their sculptures and reliefs, and from their burlesque stories of the gods,<sup>148</sup> that they had a jolly turn for humor. They played many public and private games, such as checkers and dice;<sup>149</sup> they gave many modern toys to their children, like marbles, bouncing balls, ten-pins and tops; they enjoyed wrestling contests, boxing matches and bull-fights.<sup>150</sup> At feasts and recreations they were anointed by attendants, were wreathed with flowers, fêted with wines, and presented with gifts.

From the painting and the statuary we picture them as a physically vigorous people, muscular, broad-shouldered, thin-waisted, full-lipped, and flat-footed from going unshod. The upper classes are represented as fashionably slender, imperiously tall, with oval face, sloping forehead, regular features, a long, straight nose, and magnificent eyes. Their skin was white at birth (indicating an Asiatic rather than an African origin), but rapidly darkened under the Egyptian sun;<sup>151</sup> their artists idealized them in painting the men red, the women yellow; perhaps these colors were merely cosmetic styles. The man of the people, however, is pictured as short and squat, like the "Sheik-el-Beled," formed by heavy toil and an unbalanced ration; his features are rough, his nose blunt and wide; he is intelligent but coarse. Perhaps, as in so many other instances, the people and their rulers were of different races: the rulers of Asiatic, the people of African, derivation. The hair was dark, sometimes curly, but never woolly. Women bobbed their hair in the most modern mode; men shaved lips and chin, but consoled themselves with magnificent wigs. Often, in order to wear these more comfortably, they shaved the head; even the queen consort (e.g., Ikhnaton's mother Tiy) cut off all her hair to wear more easily the royal wig and crown. It was a matter of rigid etiquette that the king should have the biggest wig.<sup>152</sup>

According to their means they repaired the handiwork of nature with subtle cosmetic art. Faces were rouged, lips were painted, nails were colored, hair and limbs were oiled; even in the sculptures the Egyptian

women have painted eyes. Those who could afford it had seven creams and two kinds of rouge put into their tombs when they died. The remains abound in toilet sets, mirrors, razors, hair-curlers, hair-pins, combs, cosmetic boxes, dishes and spoons—made of wood, ivory, alabaster or bronze, and designed in delightful and appropriate forms. Eye-paint still survives in some of the tubes. The kohl that women use today for painting the eyebrows and the face is a lineal descendant of the oil used by the Egyptians; it has come down to us through the Arabs, whose word for it, *al-kohl*, has given us our word alcohol. Perfumes of all sorts were used on the body and the clothes, and homes were made fragrant with incense and myrrh.<sup>121</sup>

Their clothing ran through every gradation from primitive nudity to the gorgeous dress of Empire days. Children of both sexes went about, till their teens, naked except for ear-rings and necklaces; the girls, however, showed a befitting modesty by wearing a string of beads around the middle.<sup>122</sup> Servants and peasants limited their everyday wardrobe to a loin-cloth. Under the Old Kingdom free men and women went naked to the navel, and covered themselves from waist to knees with a short, tight skirt of white linen.<sup>123</sup> Since shame is a child of custom rather than of nature, these simple garments contented the conscience as completely as Victorian petticoats and corsets, or the evening dress of the contemporary American male; "our virtues lie in the interpretation of the time." Even the priests, in the first dynasties, wore nothing but loin-cloths, as we see from the statue of Ranofer.<sup>124</sup> When wealth increased, clothing increased; the Middle Kingdom added a second and larger skirt over the first, and the Empire added a covering for the breast, with now and then a cape. Coachmen and grooms took on formidable costumes, and ran through the streets in full livery to clear a way for the chariots of their masters. Women, in the prosperous dynasties, abandoned the tight skirt for a loose robe that passed over the shoulder and was joined in a clasp under the right breast. Flounces, embroideries and a thousand frills appeared, and fashion entered like a serpent to disturb the paradise of primitive nudity.<sup>125</sup>

Both sexes loved ornament, and covered neck, breast, arms, wrists and ankles with jewelry. As the nation fattened on the tribute of Asia and the commerce of the Mediterranean world, jewelry ceased to be restricted to the aristocracy, and became a passion with all classes. Every scribe and

merchant had his seal of silver or gold; every man had a ring, every woman had an ornamental chain. These chains, as we see them in the museums today, are of infinite variety: some of them two to three inches, some of them five feet, in length; some thick and heavy, some "as slight and flexible as the finest Venetian lace."<sup>128</sup> About the time of the Eighteenth Dynasty ear-rings became *de rigueur*; every one had to have the ears pierced for them, not only girls and women, but boys and men.<sup>129</sup> Men as well as women decorated their persons with bracelets and rings, pendants and beads of costly stone. The women of ancient Egypt could learn very little from us in the matter of cosmetics and jewelry if they were reincarnated among us today.

### 6. Letters

#### *Education—Schools of government—Paper and ink—Stages in the development of writing—Forms of Egyptian writing*

The priests imparted rudimentary instruction to the children of the well-to-do in schools attached to the temples, as in the Roman Catholic parishes of our age.<sup>130</sup> One high-priest, who was what we should term Minister or Secretary of Education, calls himself "Chief of the Royal Stable of Instruction."<sup>131</sup> In the ruins of a school which was apparently part of the Ramesseum a large number of shells has been found, still bearing the lessons of the ancient pedagogue. The teacher's function was to produce scribes for the clerical work of the state. To stimulate his pupils he wrote eloquent essays on the advantages of education. "Give thy heart to learning, and love her like a mother," says one edifying papyrus, "for there is nothing so precious as learning." "Behold," says another, "there is no profession that is not governed; it is only the learned man who rules himself." It is a misfortune to be a soldier, writes an early bookworm; it is a weariness to till the earth; the only happiness is "to turn the heart to books during the daytime and to read during the night."<sup>132</sup>

Copy-books survive from the days of the Empire with the corrections of the masters still adorning the margins; the abundance of errors would console the modern schoolboy.<sup>133</sup> The chief method of instruction was the dictation or copying of texts, which were written upon potsherds or limestone flakes.<sup>134</sup> The subjects were largely commercial, for the Egyptians were the first and greatest utilitarians; but the chief topic of pedagogic

discourse was virtue, and the chief problem, as ever, was discipline. "Do not spend thy time in wishing, or thou wilt come to a bad end," we read in one of the copy-books. "Let thy mouth read the book in thy hand; take advice from those who know more than thou dost"—this last is probably one of the oldest phrases in any language. Discipline was vigorous, and based upon the simplest principles. "The youth has a back," says a euphemistic manuscript, "and attends when he is beaten, . . . for the ears of the young are placed on the back." A pupil writes to his former teacher: "Thou didst beat my back, and thy instructions went into my ear." That this animal-training did not always succeed appears from a papyrus in which a teacher laments that his former pupils love books much less than beer.<sup>125</sup>

Nevertheless, a large number of the temple students were graduated from the hands of the priest to high schools attached to the offices of the state treasury. There, in the first known School of Government, the young scribes were instructed in public administration. On graduating they were apprenticed to officials, who taught them through plenty of work. Perhaps it was a better way of securing and training public servants than our modern selection of them by popularity and subserviency, and the noise of the hustings. In this manner Egypt and Babylonia developed, more or less simultaneously, the earliest school-systems in history;<sup>126</sup> not till the nineteenth century of our era was the public instruction of the young to be so well organized again.

In the higher grades the student was allowed to use paper—one of the main items of Egyptian trade, and one of the permanent gifts of Egypt to the world. The stem of the papyrus plant was cut into strips, other strips were placed crosswise upon these, the sheet was pressed, and paper, the very stuff (and nonsense) of civilization, was made.<sup>127</sup> How well they made it may be judged from the fact that manuscripts written by them five thousand years ago are still intact and legible. Sheets were combined into books by gumming the right edge of one sheet to the left edge of the next; in this way rolls were produced which were sometimes forty yards in length; they were seldom longer, for there were no verbose historians in Egypt. Ink, black and indestructible, was made by mixing water with soot and vegetable gums on a wooden palette; the pen was a simple reed, fashioned at the tip into a tiny brush.<sup>128</sup>

With these modern instruments the Egyptians wrote the most ancient

of literatures. Their language had probably come in from Asia; the oldest specimens of it show many Semitic affinities.<sup>13</sup> The earliest writing was apparently pictographic—an object was represented by drawing a picture of it: e.g., the word for house (Egyptian *per*) was indicated by a small rectangle with an opening on one of the long sides. As some ideas were too abstract to be literally pictured, pictography passed into ideography: certain pictures were by custom and convention used to represent not the objects pictured but the ideas suggested by them; so the forepart of a lion meant supremacy (as in the Sphinx), a wasp meant royalty, and a tadpole stood for thousands. As a further development along this line, abstract ideas, which had at first resisted representation, were indicated by picturing objects whose names happened to resemble the spoken words that corresponded to the ideas; so the picture of a lute came to mean not only *lute*, but *good*, because the Egyptian word-sound for lute—*nefer*—resembled the word-sound for good—*nofer*. Queer rebus combinations grew out of these homonyms—words of like sound but different meanings. Since the verb *to be* was expressed in the spoken language by the sound *khopiru*, the scribe, being puzzled to find a picture for so intangible a conception, split the word into parts, *kho-pi-ru*, expressed these by picturing in succession a sieve (called in the spoken language *khau*), a mat (*pi*), and a mouth (*ru*); use and wont, which sanctify so many absurdities, soon made this strange assortment of characters suggest the idea of being. In this way the Egyptian arrived at the syllable, the syllabic sign, and the syllabary—i.e., a collection of syllabic signs; and by dividing difficult words into syllables, finding homonyms for these, and drawing in combination the objects suggested by these syllabic sounds, he was able, in the course of time, to make the hieroglyphic signs convey almost any idea.

Only one step remained—to invent letters. The sign for a house meant at first the word for house—*per*; then it meant the sound *per*, or *p-r* with any vowel in between, as a syllable in any word. Then the picture was shortened, and used to represent the sound *po*, *pa*, *pu*, *pe* or *pi* in any word; and since vowels were never written, this was equivalent to having a character for *P*. By a like development the sign for a hand (Egyptian *dot*) came to mean *do*, *da*, etc., finally *D*; the sign for mouth (*ro* or *ru*) came to mean *R*; the sign for snake (*zt*) became *Z*; the sign for lake (*sby*) became *Sh*. . . . The result was an alphabet of twenty-four consonants, which passed with Egyptian and Phœnician trade to all quarters of the Mediterranean, and came down, via Greece and Rome, as one of the most

precious parts of our Oriental heritage.<sup>10</sup> Hieroglyphics are as old as the earliest dynasties; alphabetic characters appear first in inscriptions left by the Egyptians in the mines of the Sinai peninsula, variously dated at 2500 and 1500 B.C.<sup>11</sup>

Whether wisely or not, the Egyptians never adopted a completely alphabetic writing; like modern stenographers they mingled pictographs, ideographs and syllabic signs with their letters to the very end of their civilization. This has made it difficult for scholars to read Egyptian, but it is quite conceivable that such a medley of longhand and shorthand facilitated the business of writing for those Egyptians who could spare the time to learn it. Since English speech is no honorable guide to English spelling, it is probably as difficult for a contemporary lad to learn the devious ways of English orthography as it was for the Egyptian scribe to memorize by use the five hundred hieroglyphs, their secondary syllabic meanings, and their tertiary alphabetic uses. In the course of time a more rapid and sketchy form of writing was developed for manuscripts, as distinguished from the careful "sacred carvings" of the monuments. Since this corruption of hieroglyphic was first made by the priests and the temple scribes, it was called by the Greeks *hieratic*; but it soon passed into common use for public, commercial and private documents. A still more abbreviated and careless form of this script was developed by the common people, and therefore came to be known as *demotic*. On the monuments, however, the Egyptian insisted on having his lordly and lovely hieroglyphic—perhaps the most picturesque form of writing ever made.

### 7. Literature

*Texts and libraries—The Egyptian Sinbad—The Story of Sinuhe—Fiction—An amorous fragment—Love poems—History—A literary revolution*

Most of the literature that survives from ancient Egypt is written in hieratic script. Little of it remains, and we are forced to estimate it from the fragments that do it only the blind justice of chance; perhaps time destroyed the Shakespeares of Egypt, and preserved only the poets laureate. A great official of the Fourth Dynasty is called on his tomb "Scribe

\* Sir Charles Marston believes, from his recent researches in Palestine, that the alphabet was a Semitic invention, and credits it, on highly imaginative grounds, to Abraham himself.<sup>11a</sup>

of the House of Books";<sup>142</sup> we cannot tell whether this primeval library was a repository of literature, or only a dusty storehouse of public records and documents. The oldest extant Egyptian literature consists of the "Pyramid Texts"—pious matter engraved on the walls in five pyramids of the Fifth and Sixth Dynasties.<sup>143</sup> Libraries have come down to us from as far back as 2000 B.C.—papyri rolled and packed in jars, labeled, and ranged on shelves;<sup>144</sup> in one such jar was found the oldest form of the story of Sinbad the Sailor, or, as we might rather call it, Robinson Crusoe.

"The Story of the Shipwrecked Sailor" is a simple autobiographical fragment, full of life and feeling. "How glad is he," says this ancient mariner, in a line reminiscent of Dante, "that relateth what he hath experienced when the calamity hath passed!"

I will relate to thee something that was experienced by me myself, when I had set out for the mincs of the Sovereign and had gone down to the sea in a ship of 180 feet in length and 60 feet in breadth; and therein were 120 sailors of the pick of Egypt. They scanned the sky, they scanned the earth, and their hearts were more . . . than those of lions. They foretold a storm or ever it came, and a tempest when as yet it was not.

A storm burst while we were yet at sea. . . . We flew before the wind and it made . . . a wave eight cubits high. . . .

Then the ship perished, and of them that were in it not one survived. And I was cast onto an island by a wave of the sea, and I spent three days alone with mine heart as my companion. I slept under the shelter of a tree, and embraced the shade. Then I stretched forth my feet in order to find out what I could put into my mouth. I found figs and vines there, and all manner of fine leeks. . . . There were fish there and fowl, and there was nothing that was not in it. . . . When I had made me a fire-drill I kindled a fire and made a burnt-offering for the gods.<sup>145</sup>

Another tale recounts the adventures of Sinuhe, a public official who flees from Egypt at the death of Amenemhet I, wanders from country to country of the Near East, and, despite prosperity and honors there, suffers unbearably from lonesomeness for his native land. At last he gives up riches, and makes his way through many hardships back to Egypt.

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\* A later group of funerary inscriptions, written in ink upon the inner sides of the wooden coffins used to inter certain nobles and magnates of the Middle Kingdom, have been gathered together by Breasted and others under the name of "Coffin Texts."<sup>146</sup>

O God, whosoever thou art, that didst ordain this flight, bring me again to the House (i.e., the Pharaoh). Peradventure thou wilt suffer me to see the place wherein mine heart dwelleth. What is a greater matter than that my corpse should be buried in the land wherein I was born? Come to mine aid! May good befall, may God show me mercy!

In the sequel we find him home again, weary and dusty with many miles of desert travel, and fearful lest the Pharaoh reprove him for his long absence from a land which, like all others, looked upon itself as the only civilized country in the world. But the Pharaoh forgives him, and extends to him every cosmetic courtesy:

I was placed in the house of a king's son, in which there was noble equipment, and a bath was therein. . . . Years were made to pass away from my body; I was shaved (?) and my hair was combed (?). A load (of dirt?) was given over to the desert, and the (filthy) clothes to the sand-farers. And I was arrayed in finest linen, and anointed with the best oil.<sup>147</sup>

Short stories are diverse and plentiful in the fragments that have come down to us of Egyptian literature. There are marvelous tales of ghosts, miracles, and other fascinating concoctions, as credible as the detective stories that satisfy modern statesmen; there are high-sounding romances of princes and princesses, kings and queens, including the oldest known form of the tale of Cinderella, her exquisite foot, her wandering slipper, and her royal-hymenical dénouement;<sup>148</sup> there are fables of animals illustrating by their conduct the foibles and passions of humanity, and pointing morals sagely<sup>149</sup>—a kind of premonitory plagiarism from Æsop and La Fontaine. Typical of the Egyptian mingling of natural and supernatural is the tale of Anupu and Bitiu, older and younger brothers, who live happily on their farm until Anupu's wife falls in love with Bitiu, is repulsed by him, and revenges herself by accusing him, to his brother, of having offered her violence. Gods and crocodiles come to Bitiu's aid against Anupu; but Bitiu, disgusted with mankind, mutilates himself to prove his innocence, retires Timon-like to the woods, and places his heart unreachably high on the topmost flower of a tree. The gods, pitying his loneliness, create for him a wife of such beauty that the Nile falls in love with her, and steals a lock of her hair. Drifting down the stream, the lock is found by the Pharaoh, who, intoxicated by its scent, commands his henchmen to find the owner. She is found and brought to him, and he marries her. Jealous of Bitiu he sends men to cut down the tree on which Bitiu has placed



his heart. The tree is cut down, and as the flower touches the earth Bitiu dies.<sup>100</sup> How little the taste of our ancestors differed from our own!

The early literature of the Egyptians is largely religious; and the oldest Egyptian poems are the hymns of the Pyramid Texts. Their form is also the most ancient poetic form known to us—that “parallelism of members,” or repetition of the thought in different phrase, which the Hebrew poets adopted from the Egyptians and Babylonians, and immortalized in the Psalms.<sup>101</sup> As the Old passes into the Middle Kingdom, the literature tends to become secular and “profane.” We catch some glimpse of a lost body of amorous literature in a fragment preserved to us through the laziness of a Middle Kingdom scribe who did not complete his task of wiping clear an old papyrus, but left legible some twenty-five lines that tell of a simple shepherd’s encounter with a goddess. “This goddess,” says the story, “met with him as he wended his way to the pool, and she had stripped off her clothes and disarrayed her hair.” The shepherd reports the matter cautiously:

“Behold ye, when I went down to the swamp. . . . I saw a woman therein, and she looked not like a mortal being. My hair stood on end when I saw her tresses, because her color was so bright. Never will I do what she said; awe of her is in my body.”<sup>102</sup>

The love songs abound in number and beauty, but as they celebrate chiefly the amours of brothers and sisters they will shock or amuse the modern ear. One collection is called “The Beautiful Joyous Songs of thy sister whom thy heart loves, who walks in the fields.” An ostrakon or shell dating back to the Nineteenth or Twentieth Dynasty plays a modern theme on the ancient chords of desire:

The love of my beloved leaps on the bank of the stream.  
A crocodile lies in the shadows;  
Yet I go down into the water, and breast the wave.  
My courage is high on the stream,  
And the water is as land to my feet.  
It is her love that makes me strong.  
She is a book of spells to me.  
When I behold my beloved coming my heart is glad,  
My arms are spread apart to embrace her;

My heart rejoices forever . . . since my beloved came.  
When I embrace her I am as one who is in Incense Land,  
As one who carries perfumes.  
When I kiss her, her lips are opened,  
And I am made merry without beer.  
Would that I were her Negress slave who is in attendance on her;  
So should I behold the hue of all her limbs.<sup>128</sup>

The lines have been arbitrarily divided here; we cannot tell from the external form of the original that it is verse. The Egyptians knew that music and feeling are the twin essences of poetry; if these were present, the outward shape did not matter. Often, however, the rhythm was accentuated, as we have seen, by "parallelism of members." Sometimes the poet used the device of beginning every sentence or stanza with the same word; sometimes he played like a punster with like sounds meaning unlike or incongruous things; and it is clear from the texts that the trick of alliteration is as old as the Pyramids.<sup>129</sup> These simple forms were enough; with them the Egyptian poet could express almost every shade of that "romantic" love which Nietzsche supposed was an invention of the Troubadours. The Harris Papyrus shows that such sentiments could be expressed by a woman as well as by a man:

I am thy first sister,  
And thou art to me as the garden  
Which I have planted with flowers  
And all sweet-smelling herbs.  
I directed a canal into it,  
That thou mightest dip thy hand into it  
When the north wind blows cool.  
The beautiful place where we take a walk,  
When thy hand rests within mine,  
With thoughtful mind and joyous heart  
Because we walk together.  
It is intoxicating to me to hear thy voice,  
And my life depends upon hearing thee.  
Whenever I see thee  
It is better to me than food or drink.<sup>130</sup>

All in all it is astonishing how varied the fragments are. Formal letters, legal documents, historical narratives, magic formulas, laborious hymns, books

of devotion, songs of love and war, romantic novelettes, moral exhortations, philosophical treatises—everything is represented here except epic and drama, and even of these one might by stretching a point find instances. The story of Rameses II's dashing victories, engraved patiently in verse upon brick after brick of the great pylon at Luxor, is epic at least in length and dulness. In another inscription Rameses IV boasts that in a play he had defended Osiris from Set, and had recalled Osiris to life.<sup>159</sup> Our knowledge does not allow us to amplify this hint.

Historiography, in Egypt, is as old as history; even the kings of the predynastic period kept historical records proudly.<sup>157</sup> Official historians accompanied the Pharaohs on their expeditions, never saw their defeats, and recorded, or invented, the details of their victories; already the writing of history had become a cosmetic art. As far back as 2500 B.C. Egyptian scholars made lists of their kings, named the years from them, and chronicled the outstanding events of each year and reign; by the time of Thutmose III these documents became full-fledged histories, eloquent with patriotic emotion.<sup>158</sup> Egyptian philosophers of the Middle Kingdom thought both man and history old and effete, and mourned the lusty youth of their race; Khékheperre-Sonbu, a *savant* of the reign of Senusret II, about 2150 B.C., complained that all things had long since been said, and nothing remained for literature except repetition. "Would," he cried unhappily, "that I had words that are unknown, utterances and sayings in new language, that hath not yet passed away, and without that which hath been said repeatedly—not an utterance that hath grown stale, what the ancestors have already said."<sup>159</sup>

Distance blurs for us the variety and changefulness of Egyptian literature, as it blurs the individual differences of unfamiliar peoples. Nevertheless, in the course of its long development Egyptian letters passed through movements and moods as varied as those that have disturbed the history of European literature. As in Europe, so in Egypt the language of everyday speech diverged gradually, at last almost completely, from that in which the books of the Old Kingdom had been written. For a long time authors continued to compose in the ancient tongue; scholars acquired it in school, and students were compelled to translate the "classics" with the help of grammars and vocabularies, and with the occasional assistance of "interlinears." In the fourteenth century B.C. Egyptian authors rebelled against this bondage to tradition, and like Dante and Chaucer dared to write in the language of the people; Ikhnaton's famous *Hymn to the Sun* is itself composed in the popular speech. The new literature was realistic, youthful, buoyant; it took delight in flouting the old forms and

describing the new life. In time this language also became literary and formal, refined and precise, rigid and impeccable with conventions of word and phrase; once again the language of letters separated from the language of speech, and scholasticism flourished; the schools of Saïte Egypt spent half their time studying and translating the "classics" of Ikhnaton's day.<sup>100</sup> Similar transformations of the native tongue went on under the Greeks, under the Romans, under the Arabs; another is going on today. *Panta rei*—all things flow; only scholars never change.

### 8. Science

*Origins of Egyptian science—Mathematics—Astronomy and the calendar — Anatomy and physiology — Medicine, surgery and hygiene*

The scholars of Egypt were mostly priests, enjoying, far from the turmoil of life, the comfort and security of the temples; and it was these priests who, despite all their superstitions, laid the foundations of Egyptian science. According to their own legends the sciences had been invented some 18,000 B.C. by Thoth, the Egyptian god of wisdom, during his three-thousand-year-long reign on earth; and the most ancient books in each science were among the twenty thousand volumes composed by this learned deity.<sup>\*101</sup> Our knowledge does not permit us to improve substantially upon this theory of the origins of science in Egypt.

At the very outset of recorded Egyptian history we find mathematics highly developed; the design and construction of the Pyramids involved a precision of measurement impossible without considerable mathematical lore. The dependence of Egyptian life upon the fluctuations of the Nile led to careful records and calculations of the rise and recession of the river; surveyors and scribes were continually remeasuring the land whose boundaries had been obliterated by the inundation, and this measuring of the land was evidently the origin of *geo*-metry.<sup>102</sup> Nearly all the ancients agreed in ascribing the invention of this science to the Egyptians.<sup>103</sup> Josephus, however, thought that Abraham had brought arithmetic from Chaldea (i.e., Mesopotamia) to Egypt;<sup>104</sup> and it is not impossible that this and other arts came to Egypt from "Ur of the Chaldees," or some other center of western Asia.

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\* So we are assured by Iamblichus (ca. 300 A.D.). Manetho, the Egyptian historian (ca. 300 B.C.), would have considered this estimate unjust to the god; the proper number of Thoth's works, in his reckoning, was 36,000. The Greeks celebrated Thoth under the name of Hermes Trismegistus—Hermes (Mercury) the Thrice-Great.<sup>105</sup>

The figures used were cumbersome—one stroke for 1, two strokes for 2, . . . nine strokes for 9, with a new sign for 10. Two 10 signs stood for 20, three 10 signs for 30, . . . nine for 90, with a new sign for 100. Two 100 signs stood for 200, three 100 signs for 300, . . . nine for 900, with a new sign for 1000. The sign for 1,000,000 was a picture of a man striking his hands above his head, as if to express amazement that such a number should exist.<sup>106</sup> The Egyptians fell just short of the decimal system; they had no zero, and never reached the idea of expressing all numbers with ten digits: e.g., they used twenty-seven signs to write 999.<sup>107</sup> They had fractions, but always with the numerator 1; to express  $\frac{3}{4}$  they wrote  $\frac{1}{2} + \frac{1}{4}$ . Multiplication and division tables are as old as the Pyramids. The oldest mathematical treatise known is the Ahmes Papyrus, dating back to 2000-1700 B.C.; but this in turn refers to mathematical writings five hundred years more ancient than itself. It illustrates by examples the computation of the capacity of a barn or the area of a field, and passes to algebraic equations of the first degree.<sup>108</sup> Egyptian geometry measured not only the area of squares, circles and cubes, but also the cubic content of cylinders and spheres; and it arrived at 3.16 as the value of  $\pi$ .<sup>109</sup> We enjoy the honor of having advanced from 3.16 to 3.1416 in four thousand years.

Of Egyptian physics and chemistry we know nothing, and almost as little of Egyptian astronomy. The star-gazers of the temples seem to have conceived the earth as a rectangular box, with mountains at the corners upholding the sky.<sup>110</sup> They made no note of eclipses, and were in general less advanced than their Mesopotamian contemporaries. Nevertheless they knew enough to predict the day on which the Nile would rise, and to orient their temples toward that point on the horizon where the sun would appear on the morning of the summer solstice.<sup>111</sup> Perhaps they knew more than they cared to publish among a people whose superstitions were so precious to their rulers; the priests regarded their astronomical studies as an esoteric and mysterious science, which they were reluctant to disclose to the common world.<sup>112</sup> For century after century they kept track of the position and movements of the planets, until their records stretched back for thousands of years. They distinguished between planets and fixed stars, noted in their catalogues stars of the fifth magnitude (practically invisible to the unaided eye), and charted what they thought were the astral influences of the heavens on the fortunes of men. From these observations they built the calendar which was to be another of Egypt's greatest gifts to mankind.

They began by dividing the year into three seasons of four months each: first, the rise, overflow and recession of the Nile; second, the period of cultivation; and third, the period of harvesting. To each of these months they assigned thirty days, as being the most convenient approximation to the lunar

month of twenty-nine and a half days; their word for month, like ours, was derived from their symbol for the moon.\* At the end of the twelfth month they added five days to bring the year into harmony with the river and the sun.<sup>171</sup> As the beginning of their year they chose the day on which the Nile usually reached its height, and on which, originally, the great star Sirius (which they called Sothis) rose simultaneously with the sun. Since their calendar allowed only 365, instead of  $365\frac{1}{4}$ , days to a year, this "heliacal rising" of Sirius (i.e., its appearance just before sunrise, after having been invisible for a number of days) came a day later every four years; and in this way the Egyptian calendar diverged by six hours annually from the actual calendar of the sky. The Egyptians never corrected this error. Many years later (46 B.C.) the Greek astronomers of Alexandria, by direction of Julius Caesar, improved this calendar by adding an extra day every fourth year; this was the "Julian Calendar." Under Pope Gregory XIII (1582) a more accurate correction was made by omitting this extra day (February 29th) in century years not divisible by 400; this is the "Gregorian Calendar" that we use today. Our calendar is essentially the creation of the ancient Near East.<sup>172</sup>

Despite the opportunities offered by embalming, the Egyptians made relatively poor progress in the study of the human body. They thought that the blood-vessels carried air, water, and excretory fluids, and they believed the

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\* The clepsydra, or water-clock, was so old with the Egyptians that they attributed its invention to their handy god-of-all-trades, Thoth. The oldest clock in existence dates from Thutmose III, and is now in the Berlin Museum. It consists of a bar of wood, divided into six parts or hours, upon which a crosspiece was so placed that its shadow on the bar would indicate the time of the morning or the afternoon.<sup>173</sup>

† Since the heliacal rising of Sirius occurred one day later, every four years, than the Egyptian calendar demanded, the error amounted to 365 days in 1460 years; on the completion of this "Sothic cycle" (as the Egyptians called it) the paper calendar and the celestial calendar again agreed. Since we know from the Latin author Censorius that the heliacal rising of Sirius coincided in 139 A.D. with the beginning of the Egyptian calendar year, we may presume that a similar coincidence occurred every 1460 years previously—i.e., in 1321 B.C., 2781 B.C., 4241 B.C., etc. And since the Egyptian calendar was apparently established in a year when the heliacal rising of Sirius took place on the first day of the first month, we conclude that that calendar came into operation in a year that opened a Sothic cycle. The earliest mention of the Egyptian calendar is in the religious texts inscribed in the pyramids of the Fourth Dynasty. Since this dynasty is unquestionably earlier than 1321 B.C., the calendar must have been established in 2781 B.C., or 4241 B.C., or still earlier. The older date, once acclaimed as the first definite date in history, has been disputed by Professor Scharff, and it is possible that we shall have to accept 2781 B.C. as the approximate birth-year of the Egyptian calendar. This would require a foreshortening, by three or four hundred years, of the dates assigned above for the early dynasties and the great Pyramids. As the matter is very much in dispute, the chronology of the *Cambridge Ancient History* has been adopted in these pages.

heart and bowels to be the seat of the mind; perhaps if we knew what they meant by these terms we should find them not so divergent from our own ephemeral certainties. They described with general accuracy the larger bones and viscera, and recognized the function of the heart as the driving power of the organism and the center of the circulatory system: "its vessels," says the Ebers Papyrus,<sup>176</sup> "lead to all the members; whether the doctor lays his finger on the forehead, on the back of the head, on the hands, . . . or on the feet, everywhere he meets with the heart." From this to Leonardo and Harvey was but a step—which took three thousand years.

The glory of Egyptian science was medicine. Like almost everything else in the cultural life of Egypt, it began with the priests, and dripped with evidences of its magical origins. Among the people amulets were more popular than pills as preventive or curative of disease; disease was to them a possession by devils, and was to be treated with incantations. A cold for instance, could be exorcised by such magic words as: "Depart, cold, son of a cold, thou who breakest the bones, destroyest the skull, makest ill the seven openings of the head! . . . Go out on the floor, stink, stink, stink!"<sup>177</sup>—a cure probably as effective as contemporary remedies for this ancient disease. From such depths we rise in Egypt to great physicians, surgeons and specialists, who acknowledged an ethical code that passed down into the famous Hippocratic oath.<sup>178</sup> Some of them specialized in obstetrics or gynecology, some treated only gastric disorders, some were oculists so internationally famous that Cyrus sent for one of them to come to Persia.<sup>179</sup> The general practitioner was left to gather the crumbs and heal the poor; in addition to which he was expected to provide cosmetics, hair-dyes, skin-culture, limb-beautification, and flea-extermimators.<sup>180</sup>

Several papyri devoted to medicine have come down to us. The most valuable of them, named from the Edwin Smith who discovered it, is a roll fifteen feet long, dating about 1600 B.C., and going back for its sources to much earlier works; even in its extant form it is the oldest scientific document known to history. It describes forty-eight cases in clinical surgery, from cranial fractures to injuries of the spine. Each case is treated in logical order, under the heads of provisional diagnosis, examination, semeiology, diagnosis, prognosis, treatment, and glosses on the terms used. The author notes, with a clarity unrivaled till the eighteenth century of our era, that control of the lower limbs is localized in the "brain"—a word which here appears for the first time in literature.<sup>181</sup>

The Egyptians enjoyed a great variety of diseases, though they had to die of them without knowing their Greek names. The mummies and

papyri tell of spinal tuberculosis, arteriosclerosis, gall-stones, small-pox, infantile paralysis, anemia, rheumatic arthritis, epilepsy, gout, mastoiditis, appendicitis, and such marvelous affections as spondylitis deformans and achondroplasia. There are no signs of syphilis or cancer; but pyorrhea and dental caries, absent in the oldest mummies, become frequent in the later ones, indicating the progress of civilization. The atrophy and fusion of the bones of the small toe, often ascribed to the modern shoe, was common in ancient Egypt, where nearly all ages and ranks went barefoot.<sup>183</sup>

Against these diseases the Egyptian doctors were armed with an abundant pharmacopœia. The Ebers Papyrus lists seven hundred remedies for everything from snake-bite to puerperal fever. The Kahun Papyrus (ca. 1850 B.C.) prescribes suppositories apparently used for contraception.<sup>184</sup> The tomb of an Eleventh Dynasty queen revealed a medicine chest containing vases, spoons, dried drugs, and roots. Prescriptions hovered between medicine and magic, and relied for their effectiveness in great part on the repulsiveness of the concoction. Lizard's blood, swine's ears and teeth, putrid meat and fat, a tortoise's brains, an old book boiled in oil, the milk of a lying-in woman, the water of a chaste woman, the *excreta* of men, donkeys, dogs, lions, cats and lice—all these are found in the prescriptions. Baldness was treated by rubbing the head with animal fat. Some of these cures passed from the Egyptians to the Greeks, from the Greeks to the Romans, and from the Romans to us; we still swallow trustfully the strange mixtures that were brewed four thousand years ago on the banks of the Nile.<sup>185</sup>

The Egyptians tried to promote health by public sanitation,\* by circumcision of males,<sup>†</sup> and by teaching the people the frequent use of the enema. Diodorus Siculus<sup>187</sup> tells us:

In order to prevent sicknesses they look after the health of their body by means of drenches, fastings and emetics, sometimes every day, and sometimes at intervals of three or four days. For they say that the larger part of the food taken into the body is superfluous, and that it is from this superfluous part that diseases are engendered.‡

Pliny believed that this habit of taking enemas was learned by the Egyptians from observing the ibis, a bird that counteracts the constipating

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\* Excavations reveal arrangements for the collection of rain-water and the disposal of sewage by a system of copper pipes.<sup>186</sup>

† Even the earliest tombs give evidence of this practice.<sup>188</sup>

‡ So old is the modern saw that we live on one-fourth of what we eat, and the doctors live on the rest.



character of its food by using its long bill as a rectal syringe.<sup>199</sup> Herodotus reports that the Egyptians "purge themselves every month, three days successively, seeking to preserve health by emetics and enemas; for they suppose that all diseases to which men are subject proceed from the food they use." And this first historian of civilization ranks the Egyptians as, "next to the Libyans, the healthiest people in the world."<sup>200</sup>

### 9. Art

*Architecture—Old Kingdom, Middle Kingdom, Empire and Saïte  
sculpture—Bas-relief—Painting—Minor arts—Music—The artists*

The greatest element in this civilization was its art. Here, almost at the threshold of history, we find an art powerful and mature, superior to that of any modern nation, and equaled only by that of Greece. At first the luxury of isolation and peace, and then, under Thutmose III and Rameses II, the spoils of oppression and war, gave to Egypt the opportunity and the means for massive architecture, masculine statuary, and a hundred minor arts that so early touched perfection. The whole theory of progress hesitates before Egyptian art.

Architecture\* was the noblest of the ancient arts, because it combined in imposing form mass and duration, beauty and use. It began humbly in the adornment of tombs and the external decoration of homes. Dwellings were mostly of mud, with here and there some pretty woodwork (a Japanese lattice, a well-carved portal), and a roof strengthened with the tough and pliable trunks of the palm. Around the house, normally, was a wall enclosing a court; from the court steps led to the roof; from this the tenants passed down into the rooms. The well-to-do had private gardens, carefully landscaped; the cities provided public gardens for the poor, and hardly a home but had its ornament of flowers. Inside the house the walls were hung with colored matings, and the floors, if the master could afford it, were covered with rugs. People sat on these rugs rather than on chairs; the Egyptians of the Old Kingdom squatted for their meals at tables six inches high, in the fashion of the Japanese; and ate with their fingers, like Shakespeare. Under the Empire, when slaves were cheap, the upper classes sat on high cushioned chairs, and had their servants hand them course after course.<sup>201</sup>

Stone for building was too costly for homes; it was a luxury reserved for priests and kings. Even the nobles, ambitious though they were, left

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\* For the architecture of the Old Kingdom cf. sections I, 1 and 3 of this chapter.

the greatest wealth and the best building materials to the temples; in consequence the palaces that overlooked almost every mile of the river in the days of Amenhotep III crumbled into oblivion, while the abodes of the gods and the tombs of the dead remained. By the Twelfth Dynasty the pyramid had ceased to be the fashionable form of sepulture. Khnumhotep (ca. 2180 B.C.) chose at Beni-Hasan the quieter form of a colonnade built into the mountainside; and this theme, once established, played a thousand variations among the hills on the western slope of the Nile. From the time of the Pyramids to the Temple of Hathor at Denderah—i.e., for some three thousand years—there rose out of the sands of Egypt such a succession of architectural achievements as no civilization has ever surpassed.

At Karnak and Luxor a riot of columns raised by Thutmose I and III, Amenhotep III, Seti I, Rameses II and other monarchs from the Twelfth to the Twenty-second Dynasty; at Medinet-Habu (ca. 1300 B.C.) a vast but less distinguished edifice, on whose columns an Arab village rested for centuries; at Abydos the Temple of Seti I, dark and sombre in its massive ruins; at Elephantine the little Temple of Khnum (ca. 1400 B.C.), "positively Greek in its precision and elegance";<sup>101</sup> at Der-el-Bahri the stately colonnades of Queen Hatshepsut; near it the Ramesseum, another forest of colossal columns and statues reared by the architects and slaves of Rameses II; at Philæ the lovely Temple of Isis (ca. 240 B.C.) desolate and abandoned now that the damming of the Nile at Assuan has submerged the bases of its perfect columns—these are sample fragments of the many monuments that still adorn the valley of the Nile, and attest even in their ruins the strength and courage of the race that reared them. Here, perhaps, is an excess of pillars, a crowding of columns against the tyranny of the sun, a Far-Eastern aversion to symmetry, a lack of unity, a barbaric-modern adoration of size. But here, too, are grandeur, sublimity, majesty and power; here are the arch and the vault,<sup>102</sup> used sparingly because not needed, but ready to pass on their principles to Greece and Rome and modern Europe; here are decorative designs never surpassed;<sup>103</sup> here are papyriform columns, lotiform columns, "proto-Doric" columns,<sup>104</sup> Caryatid columns,<sup>105</sup> Hathor capitals, palm capitals, clerestories, and magnificent architraves full of the strength and stability that are the very soul of architecture's powerful appeal.\* The Egyptians were the greatest builders in history.

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\* A clerestory is that portion of a building which, being above the roof of the surrounding parts, admits light to the edifice by a series of openings. An architrave is the lowest part of an entablature—which is a superstructure supported by a colonnade.

Some would add that they were also the greatest sculptors. Here at the outset is the Sphinx, conveying by its symbolism the leonine quality of some masterful Pharaoh—perhaps Khafre-Chephren; it has not only size, as some have thought, but character. The cannon-shot of the Mamelukes have broken the nose and shorn the beard, but nevertheless those gigantic features portray with impressive skill the force and dignity, the calm and sceptical maturity, of a natural king. Across those motionless features a subtle smile has hovered for five thousand years, as if already the unknown artist or monarch had understood all that men would ever understand about men. It is a Mona Lisa in stone.

There is nothing finer in the history of sculpture than the diorite statue of Khafre in the Cairo Museum; as ancient to Praxiteles as Praxiteles to us, it nevertheless comes down across fifty centuries almost unhurt by time's rough usages; cut in the most intractable of stones, it passes on to us completely the strength and authority, the wilfulness and courage, the sensitivity and intelligence of the (artist or the) King. Near it, and even older, Pharaoh Zoser sits pouting in limestone; farther on, the guide with lighted match reveals the transparency of an alabaster Menkaure.

Quite as perfect in artistry as these portraits of royalty are the figures of the Sheik-el-Beled and the Scribe. The Scribe has come down to us in many forms, all of uncertain antiquity; the most illustrious is the squatting Scribe of the Louvre.\* The Sheik is no sheik but only an overseer of labor, armed with the staff of authority, and stepping forward as if in supervision or command. His name, apparently, was Kaapiru; but the Arab workmen who rescued him from his tomb at Sakkarā were struck with his resemblance to the Sheik-el-Beled (i.e., Mayor-of-the-Village) under whom they lived; and this title which their good humor gave him is now inseparable from his fame. He is carved only in mortal wood, but time has not seriously reduced his portly figure or his chubby legs; his waistline has all the amplitude of the comfortable *bourgeois* in every civilization; his rotund face beams with the content of a man who knows his place and glories in it. The bald head and carelessly loosened robe display the realism of an art already old enough to rebel against idealization; but here, too, is a fine simplicity, a complete humanity, expressed without bitterness, and with the ease and grace of a practised and confident hand. "If," says Maspero, "some exhibition of the world's masterpieces

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\* Cf. p. 161 above. Other scribes adorn the Cairo Museum, and the State Museum at Berlin.

were to be inaugurated, I should choose this work to uphold the honor of Egyptian art<sup>100</sup>—or would that honor rest more securely on the head of Khafre?

These are the *chefs-d'œuvres* of Old Kingdom statuary. But lesser masterpieces abound: the seated portraits of Rahotep and his wife Nofrit, the powerful figure of Ranofer the priest, the copper statues of King Phiope and his son, a falcon-head in gold, the humorous figures of the Beer-Brewer and the Dwarf Knehotep—all but one in the Cairo Museum, all without exception instinct with character. It is true that the earlier pieces are coarse and crude; that by a strange convention, running throughout Egyptian art, figures are shown with the body and eyes facing forward, but the hands and feet in profile;<sup>4</sup> that not much attention was given to the body, which was left in most cases stereotyped and unreal—all female bodies young, all royal bodies strong; and that individualization, though masterly, was generally reserved for the head. But with all the stiffness and sameness that priestly conventions and control forced upon statuary, paintings and reliefs, these works were fully redeemed by the power and depth of the conception, the vigor and precision of the execution, the character, line and finish of the product. Never was sculpture more alive: the Sheik exudes authority, the woman grinding grain gives every sense and muscle to her work, the Scribe is on the very verge of writing. And the thousand little puppets placed in the tombs to carry on essential industries for the dead were moulded with a like vivacity, so that we can almost believe, with the pious Egyptian, that the deceased could not be unhappy while these ministrants were there.

Not for many centuries did Egyptian sculpture equal again the achievements of the early dynasties. Because most of the statuary was made for the temples or the tombs, the priests determined to a great degree what forms the artist should follow; and the natural conservatism of religion crept into art, slowly stifling sculpture into a conventional, stylistic degeneration. Under the powerful monarchs of the Twelfth Dynasty the secular spirit reasserted itself, and art recaptured something of its old vigor and more than its old skill. A head of Amenemhet III in black diorite<sup>101</sup> suggests at once the recovery of character and the recovery of art; here is the quiet hardness of an able king, carved with the competence of a master. A colossal statue of Senusert III is crowned with a head and face

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<sup>4</sup> There are important exceptions to this—e.g., the Sheik-el-Beled and the Scribe; obviously the convention was not due to incapacity or ignorance.

equal in conception and execution to any portrait in the history of sculpture; and the ruined torso of Senusret I, in the Cairo Museum, ranks with the torso of Hercules in the Louvre. Animal figures abound in the Egyptian sculpture of every age, and are always full of humor and life: here is a mouse chewing a nut, an ape devotedly strumming a harp, a porcupine with every spine on the *qui vive*. Then came the Shepherd Kings, and for three hundred years Egyptian art almost ceased to be.

In the age of Hatshepsut, the Thutmoses, the Amenhoteps and the Rameses, art underwent a second resurrection along the Nile. Wealth poured in from subject Syria, passed into the temples and the courts, and trickled through them to nourish every art. Colossi of Thutmose III and Rameses II began to challenge the sky; statuary crowded every corner of the temples; masterpieces were flung forth with unprecedented abundance by a race exhilarated with what they thought was world supremacy. The fine granite bust of the great Queen in the Metropolitan Museum of Art at New York; the basalt statue of Thutmose III in the Cairo Museum; the lion sphinx of Amenhotep III in the British Museum; the limestone seated Ikhnaton in the Louvre; the granite statue of Rameses II in Turin;\* the perfect crouching figure of the same incredible monarch making an offering to the gods;<sup>10</sup> the meditative cow of Der-el-Bahri, which Maspero considered "equal, if not superior, to the best achievements of Greece and Rome in this *genre*";<sup>11</sup> the two lions of Amenhotep III, which Ruskin ranked as the best animal statuary surviving from antiquity;<sup>12</sup> the colossi cut into the rocks at Abu Simbel by the sculptors of Rameses II; the amazing remains found among the ruins of the artist Thutmose's studio at Tell-el-Amarna—a plaster model of Ikhnaton's head, full of the mysticism and poetry of that tragic king, the lovely limestone bust of Ikhnaton's Queen, Nofretete, and the even finer sandstone head of the same fair lady:<sup>13</sup> these scattered examples may illustrate the sculptural accomplishments of this abounding Empire age. Amid all these lofty masterpieces humor continues to find place; Egyptian sculptors frolic with jolly caricatures of men and animals, and even the kings and queens, in Ikhnaton's iconoclastic age, are made to smile and play.

After Rameses II this magnificence passed rapidly away. For many centuries after him art contented itself with repeating traditional works and forms. Under the Saïte kings it sought to rejuvenate itself by return-

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\* One is reminded here of the remark of an Egyptian statesman, after visiting the galleries of Europe: "*Que vous avez volé mon pays!*"—How you have raped my country!"<sup>14</sup>

ing to the simplicity and sincerity of the Old Kingdom masters. Sculptors attacked bravely the hardest stones—basalt, *breccia*, serpentine, diorite—and carved them into such realistic portraits as that of Montumihait,<sup>21</sup> and the green basalt head of a bald unknown, now looking out blackly upon the walls of the State Museum at Berlin. In bronze they cast the lovely figure of the lady Tekoschet.<sup>22</sup> Again they delighted in catching the actual features and movements of men and beasts; they moulded laughable figures of quaint animals, slaves and gods; and they formed in bronze a cat and a goat's head which are among the trophies of Berlin.<sup>23</sup> Then the Persians came down like a wolf on the fold, conquered Egypt, desecrated its temples, broke its spirit, and put an end to its art.

These—architecture and sculpture\*—are the major Egyptian arts; but if abundance counted, bas-relief would have to be added to them. No other people so tirelessly carved its history or legends upon its walls. At first we are shocked by the dull similarity of these glyptic narratives, the crowded confusion, the absence of proportion and perspective—or the ungainly attempt to achieve this by representing the far above the near; we are surprised to see how tall the Pharaoh is, and how small are his enemies; and, as in the sculpture, we find it hard to adjust our pictorial habits to eyes and breasts that face us boldly, while noses, chins and feet turn coldly away. But then we find ourselves caught by the perfect line and grace of the falcon and serpent carved on King Wenephes' tomb,<sup>24</sup> by the limestone reliefs of King Zoser on the Step-Pyramid at Sakkara, by the wood-relief of Prince Hesiré from his grave in the same locality,<sup>25</sup> and by the wounded Libyan on a Fifth Dynasty tomb at Abusir<sup>26</sup>—a patient study of muscles taut in pain. At last we bear with equanimity the long reliefs that tell how Thutmose III and Rameses II carried all before them; we recognize the perfection of flowing line in the reliefs carved for Seti I at Abydos and Karnak; and we follow with interest the picturesque engravings wherein the sculptors of Hatshepsut tell on the walls of Der-el-Bahri the story of the expedition sent by her to the mysterious land of Punt (Somaliland?). We see the long ships with full-spread sail and serried oars heading south amid waters alive with octopi, crustacea and other toilers of the sea; we watch the fleet arriving on the shores of Punt, welcomed by a startled but fascinated people and king; we see the sailors

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\* Though the word *sculpture* includes all carved forms, we shall use it as meaning especially sculpture in the round; and shall segregate under the term *bas-relief* the partial carving of forms upon a background.

carrying on board a thousand loads of native delicacies; we read the jest of the Punt workman—"Be careful of your feet, you over there; look out!" Then we accompany the heavy-laden vessels as they return northward filled (the inscription tells us) "with the marvels of the land of Punt, all the odoriferous trees of the lands of the gods, incense, ebony, ivory, gold, woods of divers kinds, cosmetics for the eyes, monkeys, dogs, panther skins, . . . never have like things been brought back for any king from the beginning of the world." The ships come through the great canal between the Red Sea and the Nile; we see the expedition landing at the docks of Thebes, depositing its varied cargo at the very feet of the Queen. And lastly we are shown, as if after the lapse of time, all these imported goods beautifying Egypt: on every side ornaments of gold and ebony, boxes of perfumes and unguents, elephants' tusks and animals' hides; while the trees brought back from Punt are flourishing so well on the soil of Thebes that under their branches even enjoy the shade. It is one of the supreme reliefs in the history of art.<sup>299\*</sup>

Bas-relief is a liaison between sculpture and painting. In Egypt, except during the reign of the Ptolemies and under the influence of Greece, painting never rose to the status of an independent art; it remained an accessory to architecture, sculpture and relief—the painter filled in the outlines carved by the cutting tool. But though subordinate, it was ubiquitous; most statues were painted, all surfaces were colored. It is an art perilously subject to time, and lacking the persistence of statuary and building. Very little remains to us of Old Kingdom painting beyond a remarkable picture of six geese from a tomb at Medum;<sup>300</sup> but from this alone we are justified in believing that already in the early dynasties this art, too, had come near to perfection. In the Middle Kingdom we find distemper painting† of a delightful decorative effect in the tombs of Ameni and Khnumhotep at Beni-Hasan, and such excellent examples of the art as the "Gazelles and the Peasants,"<sup>301</sup> and the "Cat Watching the Prey";<sup>302</sup> here again the artist has caught the main point—that his creations must move and live. Under the Empire the tombs became a riot of painting. The Egyptian artist had now developed every color in the rainbow, and was anxious to display his skill. On the walls and ceilings of homes, temples, palaces and graves he

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\* A cast of this relief may be seen in the Twelfth Egyptian Room of the Metropolitan Museum of Art at New York.

† Painting in which the pigments are mixed or tempered with egg-yolk, size (diluted glue), or egg-white.



FIG. 14—  
*Wooden figure  
of the  
“Sheik-el-Beled”*  
Cairo Museum;  
photo by Metro-  
politan Museum  
of Art





FIG. 15—Sandstone head from the workshop of the sculptor Thutmose at Amarna  
State Museum, Berlin; photo by Metropolitan Museum of Art



FIG. 16—Head of a king, probably Senusret III  
Metropolitan Museum of Art



FIG. 17—The royal falcon and serpent. Limestone relief from First Dynasty  
Louvre; photo by Metropolitan Museum



FIG. 18—Head of Thutmose III  
Cairo Museum; photo by Metropolitan

tried to portray refreshingly the life of the sunny fields—birds in flight through the air, fishes swimming in the sea, beasts of the jungle in their native haunts. Floors were painted to look like transparent pools, and ceilings sought to rival the jewelry of the sky. Around these pictures were borders of geometric or floral design, ranging from a quiet simplicity to the most fascinating complexity.<sup>23</sup> The “Dancing Girl,”<sup>24</sup> so full of originality and *esprit*, the “Bird Hunt in a Boat,”<sup>25</sup> the slim, naked beauty in ochre, mingling with other musicians in the Tomb of Nakht at Thebes<sup>26</sup>—these are stray samples of the painted population of the graves. Here, as in the bas-reliefs, the line is good and the composition poor; the participants in an action, whom we should portray as intermingled, are represented separately in succession;<sup>27</sup> superposition is again preferred to perspective; the stiff formalism and conventions of Egyptian sculpture are the order of the day, and do not reveal that enlivening humor and realism which distinguish the later statuary. But through these pictures runs a freshness of conception, a flow of line and execution, a fidelity to the life and movement of natural things, and a joyous exuberance of color and ornament, which make them a delight to the eye and the spirit. With all its shortcomings Egyptian painting would never be surpassed by any Oriental civilization until the middle dynasties of China.

The minor arts were the major art of Egypt. The same skill and energy that had built Karnak and the Pyramids, and had crowded the temples with a populace of stone, devoted itself also to the internal beautification of the home, the adornment of the body, and the development of all the graces of life. Weavers made rugs, tapestries and cushions rich in color and incredibly fine in texture; the designs which they created passed down into Syria, and are used there to this day.<sup>28</sup> The relics of Tutenkhamon's tomb have revealed the astonishing luxury of Egyptian furniture, the exquisite finish of every piece and part, chairs covered gaudily with silver and gold, beds of sumptuous workmanship and design, jewel-boxes and perfume-baskets of minute artistry, and vases that only China would excel. Tables bore costly vessels of silver, gold and bronze, crystal goblets, and sparkling bowls of diorite so finely ground that the light shone through their stone walls. The alabaster vessels of Tutenkhamon, and the perfect lotus cups and drinking bowls unearthed amid the ruins of Amenhotep III's villa at Thebes, indicate to what a high level the ceramic art was raised. Finally the jewelers of the Middle Kingdom and the Empire brought forth a profusion of precious ornaments seldom surpassed in design and

workmanship. Necklaces, crowns, rings, bracelets, mirrors, pectorals, chains, medallions; gold and silver, carnelian and felspar, *lapis lazuli* and amethyst—everything is here. The rich Egyptians took the same pleasure as the Japanese in the beauty of the little things that surrounded them; every square of ivory on their jewel-boxes had to be carved in relief and refined in precise detail. They dressed simply, but they lived completely. And when their day's work was done they refreshed themselves with music softly played on lutes, harps, sistrums, flutes and lyres.\* Temples and palaces had orchestras and choirs, and on the Pharaoh's staff was a "superintendent of singing" who organized players and musicians for the entertainment of the king. There is no trace of a musical notation in Egypt, but this may be merely a lacuna in the remains. Snefrunofr and Re'mery-Ptah were the Carusos and De Reszkes of their day, and across the centuries we hear their boast that they "fulfil every wish of the king by their beautiful singing."<sup>21</sup>

It is exceptional that their names survive, for in most cases the artists whose labors preserved the features or memory of princes, priests and kings had no means of transmitting their own names to posterity. We hear of Imhotep, the almost mythical architect of Zoser's reign; of Ineni, who designed great buildings like Der-el-Bahri for Thutmose I; of Puymre and Hapuseneb and Senmut, who carried on the architectural enterprises of Queen Hatshepsut,† of the artist Thutmose, in whose studio so many masterpieces have been found; and of Bek, the proud sculptor who tells us, in Gautier's strain, that he has saved Ikhnaton from oblivion.<sup>22</sup> Amenhotep III had as his chief architect another Amenhotep, son of Hapu; the Pharaoh placed almost limitless wealth at the disposal of his talents, and this favored artist became so famous that later Egypt worshiped him as a god. For the most part, however, the artist worked in obscurity and poverty, and was ranked no higher than other artisans or handicraftsmen by the priests and potentates who engaged him.

Egyptian religion coöperated with Egyptian wealth to inspire and foster art, and coöperated with Egypt's loss of empire and affluence to ruin it. Religion offered motives, ideas and the inspiration; but it imposed con-

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\* The lute was made by stretching a few strings along a narrow sounding-board; the sistrum was a group of small discs shaken on wires.

† Senmut was so honored by his sovereigns that he said of himself: "I was the greatest of the great in the whole land."<sup>22</sup> This is an opinion very commonly held, but not always so clearly expressed.

ventions and restraints which bound art so completely to the church that when sincere religion died among the artists, the arts that had lived on it died too. This is the tragedy of almost every civilization—that its soul is in its faith, and seldom survives philosophy.

### 10. Philosophy

*The "Instructions of Ptah-hotep"—The "Admonitions of Ipuwer"*  
*—The "Dialogue of a Misanthrope"—The Egyptian Ecclesiastes*

Historians of philosophy have been wont to begin their story with the Greeks. The Hindus, who believe that they invented philosophy, and the Chinese, who believe that they perfected it, smile at our provincialism. It may be that we are all mistaken; for among the most ancient fragments left to us by the Egyptians are writings that belong, however loosely and untechnically, under the rubric of moral philosophy. The wisdom of the Egyptians was a proverb with the Greeks, who felt themselves children beside this ancient race.<sup>222</sup>

The oldest work of philosophy known to us is the "Instruction of Ptah-hotep," which apparently goes back to 2880 B.C.—2300 years before Confucius, Socrates and Buddha.<sup>223</sup> Ptah-hotep was Governor of Memphis, and Prime Minister to the King, under the Fifth Dynasty. Retiring from office, he decided to leave to his son a manual of everlasting wisdom. It was transcribed as an antique classic by some scholars prior to the Eighteenth Dynasty. The Vizier begins:

O Prince my Lord, the end of life is at hand; old age descendeth upon me; feebleness cometh and childishness is renewed; he that is old lieth down in misery every day. The eyes are small, the ears are deaf. Energy is diminished, the heart hath no rest. . . . Command thy servant, therefore, to make over my princely authority to my son. Let me speak unto him the words of them that hearken to the counsel of the men of old time, those that once heard the gods. I pray thee, let this thing be done.

His Gracious Majesty grants the permission, advising him, however, to "discourse without causing weariness"—advice not yet superfluous for philosophers. Whereupon Ptah-hotep instructs his son:

Be not proud because thou art learned; but discourse with the ignorant man as with the sage. For no limit can be set to skill, neither

is there any craftsman that possesseth full advantages. Fair speech is more rare than the emerald that is found by slave-maidens among the pebbles. . . . Live, therefore, in the house of kindliness, and men shall come and give gifts of themselves. . . . Beware of making enmity by thy words. . . . Overstep not the truth, neither repeat that which any man, be he prince or peasant, saith in opening the heart; it is abhorrent to the soul. . . .

If thou wouldst be a wise man, beget a son for the pleasing of the god. If he make straight his course after thine example, if he arrange thine affairs in due order, do all unto him that is good. . . . If he be heedless and trespass thy rules of conduct, and is violent; if every speech that cometh from his mouth is a vile word; then beat thou him, that his talk may be fitting. . . . Precious to a man is the virtue of his son, and good character is a thing remembered. . . .

Wheresoever thou goest, beware of consorting with women. . . . If thou wouldst be wise, provide for thine house, and love thy wife that is in thine arms. . . . Silence is more profitable to thee than abundance of speech. Consider how thou mayest be opposed by an expert that speaketh in council. It is a foolish thing to speak on every kind of work. . . .

If thou be powerful make thyself to be honored for knowledge and for gentleness. . . . Beware of interruption, and of answering words with heat; put it from thee; control thyself.

And Ptah-hotep concludes with Horatian pride:

Nor shall any word that hath here been set down cease out of this land forever, but shall be made a pattern whereby princes shall speak well. My words shall instruct a man how he shall speak; . . . yea, he shall become as one skilful in obeying, excellent in speaking. Good fortune shall befall him; . . . he shall be gracious until the end of his life; he shall be contented always.<sup>21</sup>

This note of good cheer does not persist in Egyptian thought; age comes upon it quickly, and sours it. Another sage, Ipuwer, bemoans the disorder, violence, famine and decay that attended the passing of the Old Kingdom; he tells of sceptics who "would make offerings if" they "knew where the god is"; he comments upon increasing suicide, and adds, like another Schopenhauer: "Would that there might be an end of men, that there

might be no conception, no birth. If the land would but cease from noise, and strife be no more"—it is clear that Ipuwer was tired and old. In the end he dreams of a philosopher-king who will redeem men from chaos and injustice:

He brings cooling to the flame (of the social conflagration?). It is said he is the shepherd of all men. There is no evil in his heart. When his herds are few he passes the day to gather them together, their hearts being fevered. Would that he had discerned their character in the first generation. Then would he have smitten evil. He would have stretched forth his arm against it. He would have smitten the seed thereof and their inheritance. . . . Where is he to-day? Doth he sleep perchance? Behold, his might is not seen.<sup>43</sup>

This already is the voice of the prophets; the lines are cast into strophic form, like the prophetic writings of the Jews; and Breasted properly acclaims these "Admonitions" as "the earliest emergence of a social idealism which among the Hebrews we call 'Messianism.'"<sup>44</sup> Another scroll from the Middle Kingdom denounces the corruption of the age in words that almost every generation hears:

To whom do I speak today?  
Brothers are evil,  
Friends of today are not of love.  
To whom do I speak today?  
Hearts are thievish,  
Every man seizes his neighbor's goods.  
To whom do I speak today?  
The gentle man perishes,  
The bold-faced goes everywhere. . . .  
To whom do I speak today?  
When a man should arouse wrath by his evil conduct  
He stirs all men to mirth, although his iniquity is wicked. . . .

And then this Egyptian Swinburne pours out a lovely eulogy of death:

Death is before me today  
Like the recovery of a sick man,  
Like going forth into a garden after sickness.  
Death is before me today  
Like the odor of myrrh,  
Like sitting under the sail on a windy day.

Death is before me today  
Like the odor of lotus-flowers,  
Like sitting on the shore of drunkenness.

Death is before me today  
Like the course of a freshet,  
Like the return of a man from the war-galley to his house. . . .  
Death is before me today  
As a man longs to see his home  
When he had spent years of captivity.<sup>227</sup>

Saddest of all is a poem engraved upon a slab now in the Leyden Museum, and dating back to 2200 B.C. *Carpe diem*, it sings—snatch the day!

I have heard the words of Imhotep and Hardedef,  
Words greatly celebrated as their utterances.  
Behold the places thereof!—  
Their walls are dismantled,  
Their places are no more,  
As if they had never been.

None cometh from thence  
That he may tell us how they fare; . . .  
That he may content our hearts  
Until we too depart  
To the place whither they have gone.

Encourage thy heart to forget it,  
Making it pleasant for thee to follow thy desire  
While thou livest.  
Put myrrh upon thy head,  
And garments upon thee of fine linen,  
Imbued with marvelous luxuries,  
The genuine things of the gods.

Increase yet more thy delights,  
And let not thy heart languish.  
Follow thy desire and thy good,  
Fashion thy affairs on earth  
After the mandates of thine own heart,  
Till that day of lamentation come to thee  
When the silent-hearted (dead) hears not their lamentation,  
Nor he that is in the tomb attends the mourning.

Celebrate the glad day;  
 Be not weary therein.  
 Lo, no man taketh his goods with him;  
 Yea, none returneth again that is gone thither.<sup>228</sup>

This pessimism and scepticism were the result, it may be, of the broken spirit of a nation humiliated and subjected by the Hyksos invaders; they bear the same relation to Egypt that Stoicism and Epicureanism bear to a defeated and enslaved Greece.<sup>4</sup> In part such literature represents one of those interludes, like our own moral interregnum, in which thought has for a time overcome belief, and men no longer know how or why they should live. Such periods do not endure; hope soon wins the victory over thought; the intellect is put down to its customary menial place, and religion is born again, giving to men the imaginative stimulus apparently indispensable to life and work. We need not suppose that such poems expressed the views of any large number of Egyptians; behind and around the small but vital minority that pondered the problems of life and death in secular and naturalistic terms were millions of simple men and women who remained faithful to the gods, and never doubted that right would triumph, that every earthly pain and grief would be atoned for bountifully in a haven of happiness and peace.

### 11. Religion

*Sky gods—The sun god—Plant gods—Animal gods—Sex gods—  
 Human gods—Osiris—Isis and Horus—Minor deities—The  
 priests—Immortality—The "Book of the Dead"—The  
 "Negative Confession"—Magic—Corruption*

For beneath and above everything in Egypt was religion. We find it there in every stage and form from totemism to theology; we see its influence in literature, in government, in art, in everything except morality. And it is not only varied, it is tropically abundant; only in Rome and India shall we find so plentiful a pantheon. We cannot understand the Egyptian—or man—until we study his gods.

In the beginning, said the Egyptian, was the sky; and to the end this and the Nile remained his chief divinities. All these marvelous heavenly bodies were not mere bodies, they were the external forms of mighty spirits,

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<sup>4</sup> "Civil war," says Ipuwer, "pays no revenues."<sup>228</sup>



gods whose wills—not always concordant—ordained their complex and varied movements.<sup>239</sup> The sky itself was a vault, across whose vastness a great cow stood, who was the goddess Hathor; the earth lay beneath her feet, and her belly was clad in the beauty of ten thousand stars. Or (for the gods and myths differed from nome to nome) the sky was the god Sibū, lying tenderly upon the earth, which was the goddess Nuit; from their gigantic copulation all things had been born.<sup>240</sup> Constellations and stars might be gods: for example, Sahu and Sopdit (Orion and Sirius) were tremendous deities; Sahu ate gods three times a day regularly. Occasionally some such monster ate the moon, but only for a moment; soon the prayers of men and the anger of the other gods forced the greedy sow to vomit it up again.<sup>241</sup> In this manner the Egyptian populace explained an eclipse of the moon.

The moon was a god, perhaps the oldest of all that were worshiped in Egypt; but in the official theology the greatest of the gods was the sun. Sometimes it was worshiped as the supreme deity Ra or Re, the bright father who fertilized Mother Earth with rays of penetrating heat and light; sometimes it was a divine calf, born anew at every dawn, sailing the sky slowly in a celestial boat, and descending into the west, at evening, like an old man tottering to his grave. Or the sun was the god Horus, taking the graceful form of a falcon, flying majestically across the heavens day after day as if in supervision of his realm, and becoming one of the recurrent symbols of Egyptian religion and royalty. Always Ra, or the sun, was the Creator: at his first rising, seeing the earth desert and bare, he had flooded it with his energizing rays, and all living things—vegetable, animal and human—had sprung pell-mell from his eyes, and been scattered over the world. The earliest men and women, being direct children of Ra, had been perfect and happy; by degrees their descendants had taken to evil ways, and had forfeited this perfection and happiness; whereupon Ra, dissatisfied with his creatures, had destroyed a large part of the human race. Learned Egyptians questioned this popular belief, and asserted on the contrary (like certain Sumerian scholars), that the first men had been like brutes, without articulate speech or any of the arts of life.<sup>242</sup> All in all it was an intelligent mythology, expressing piously man's gratitude to earth and sun.

So exuberant was this piety that the Egyptians worshiped not merely the source, but almost every form, of life. Many plants were sacred to them: the palm-tree that shaded them amid the desert, the spring that

gave them drink in the oasis, the grove where they could meet and rest, the sycamore flourishing miraculously in the sand; these were, with excellent reason, holy things, and to the end of his civilization the simple Egyptian brought them offerings of cucumbers, grapes and figs.<sup>293</sup> Even the lowly vegetable found its devotees; and Taine amused himself by showing how the onion that so displeased Bossuet had been a divinity on the banks of the Nile.<sup>294</sup>

More popular were the animal gods; they were so numerous that they filled the Egyptian pantheon like a chattering menagerie. In one nome or another, in one period or another, Egyptians worshiped the bull, the crocodile, the hawk, the cow, the goose, the goat, the ram, the cat, the dog, the chicken, the swallow, the jackal, the serpent, and allowed some of these creatures to roam in the temples with the same freedom that is accorded to the sacred cow in India today.<sup>295</sup> When the gods became human they still retained animal doubles and symbols: Amon was represented as a goose or a ram, Ra as a grasshopper or a bull, Osiris as a bull or a ram, Sebek as a crocodile, Horus as a hawk or falcon, Hathor as a cow, and Thoth, the god of wisdom, as a baboon.<sup>296</sup> Sometimes women were offered to certain of these animals as sexual mates; the bull in particular, as the incarnation of Osiris, received this honor; and at Mendes, says Plutarch, the most beautiful women were offered in coitus to the divine goat.<sup>297</sup> From beginning to end this totemism remained as an essential and native element in Egyptian religion; human gods came to Egypt much later, and probably as gifts from western Asia.<sup>298</sup>

The goat and the bull were especially sacred to the Egyptians as representing sexual creative power; they were not merely symbols of Osiris, but incarnations of him.<sup>299</sup> Often Osiris was depicted with large and prominent organs, as a mark of his supreme power; and models of him in this form, or with a triple phallus, were borne in religious processions by the Egyptians; on certain occasions the women carried such phallic images, and operated them mechanically with strings.<sup>300</sup> Signs of sex worship appear not only in the many cases in which figures are depicted, on temple reliefs, with erect organs, but in the frequent appearance, in Egyptian symbolism, of the *crux ansata*—a cross with a handle, as a sign of sexual union and vigorous life.<sup>301</sup>

At last the gods became human—or rather, men became gods. Like the

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\* The curious reader will find again a similar custom in India; cf. Dubois, *Hindu Manners, Customs and Ceremonies*, Oxford, 1928, p. 595.

deities of Greece, the personal gods of Egypt were merely superior men and women, made in heroic mould, but composed of bone and muscle, flesh and blood; they hungered and ate, thirsted and drank, loved and mated, hated and killed, grew old and died.<sup>222</sup> There was Osiris, for example, god of the beneficent Nile, whose death and resurrection were celebrated yearly as symbolizing the fall and rise of the river, and perhaps the decay and growth of the soil. Every Egyptian of the later dynasties could tell the story of how Set (or Sît), the wicked god of desiccation, who shriveled up harvests with his burning breath, was angered at Osiris (the Nile) for extending (with his overflow) the fertility of the earth, slew him, and reigned in dry majesty over Osiris' kingdom (i.e., the river once failed to rise), until Horus, brave son of Isis, overcame Set and banished him; whereafter Osiris, brought back to life by the warmth of Isis' love, ruled benevolently over Egypt, suppressed cannibalism, established civilization, and then ascended to heaven to reign there endlessly as a god.<sup>223</sup> It was a profound myth; for history, like Oriental religion, is dualistic—a record of the conflict between creation and destruction, fertility and desiccation, rejuvenation and exhaustion, good and evil, life and death.

Profound, too, was the myth of Isis, the Great Mother. She was not only the loyal sister and wife of Osiris; in a sense she was greater than he, for—like woman in general—she had conquered death through love. Nor was she merely the black soil of the Delta, fertilized by the touch of Osiris-Nile, and making all Egypt rich with her fecundity. She was, above all, the symbol of that mysterious creative power which had produced the earth and every living thing, and of that maternal tenderness whereby, at whatever cost to the mother, the young new life is nurtured to maturity. She represented in Egypt—as Kali, Ishtar and Cybele represented in Asia, Demeter in Greece, and Ceres in Rome—the original priority and independence of the female principle in creation and in inheritance, and the originative leadership of woman in tilling the earth; for it was Isis (said the myth) who had discovered wheat and barley growing wild in Egypt, and had revealed them to Osiris (man).<sup>224</sup> The Egyptians worshipped her with especial fondness and piety, and raised up jeweled images to her as the Mother of God; her tonsured priests praised her in sonorous matins and vespers; and in midwinter of each year, coincident with the annual rebirth of the sun towards the end of our December, the temples

of her divine child, Horus (god of the sun), showed her, in holy effigy, nursing in a stable the babe that she had miraculously conceived. These poetic-philosophic legends and symbols profoundly affected Christian ritual and theology. Early Christians sometimes worshiped before the statues of Isis suckling the infant Horus, seeing in them another form of the ancient and noble myth by which woman (i.e., the female principle), creating all things, becomes at last the Mother of God.<sup>17</sup>

These—Ra (or, as he was called in the South, Amon), Osiris, Isis and Horus—were the greater gods of Egypt. In later days Ra, Amon and another god, Ptah, were combined as three embodiments or aspects of one supreme and triune deity.<sup>18</sup> There were countless lesser divinities: Anubis the jackal, Shu, Tefnut, Nephthys, Ket, Nut; . . . but we must not make these pages a museum of dead gods. Even Pharaoh was a god, always the son of Amon-Ra, ruling not merely by divine right but by divine birth, as a deity transiently tolerating the earth as his home. On his head was the falcon, symbol of Horus and totem of the tribe; from his forehead rose the *uræus* or serpent, symbol of wisdom and life, and communicating magic virtues to the crown.<sup>19</sup> The king was chief-priest of the faith, and led the great processions and ceremonies that celebrated the festivals of the gods. It was through this assumption of divine lineage and powers that he was able to rule so long with so little force.

Hence the priests of Egypt were the necessary props of the throne, and the secret police of the social order. Given a faith of such complexity, a class had to arise adept in magic and ritual, whose skill would make it indispensable in approaching the gods. In effect, though not in law, the office of priest passed down from father to son, and a class grew up which, through the piety of the people and the politic generosity of the kings, became in time richer and stronger than the feudal aristocracy or the royal family itself. The sacrifices offered to the gods supplied the priests with food and drink; the temple buildings gave them spacious homes; the revenues of temple lands and services furnished them with ample incomes; and their exemption from forced labor, military service, and ordinary taxation, left them in an enviable position of prestige and power. They deserved not a little of this power, for they accumulated and preserved the learning of Egypt, educated the youth, and disciplined themselves with rigor and zeal. Herodotus describes them almost with awe:

They are of all men the most excessively attentive to the worship of the gods, and observe the following ceremonies. . . . They wear linen garments, constantly fresh-washed. . . . They are circumcised for the sake of cleanliness, thinking it better to be clean than handsome. They shave their whole body every third day, that neither lice nor any other impurity may be found upon them. . . . They wash themselves in cold water twice every day and twice every night."<sup>1</sup>

What distinguished this religion above everything else was its emphasis on immortality. If Osiris, the Nile, and all vegetation, might rise again, so might man. The amazing preservation of the dead body in the dry soil of Egypt lent some encouragement to this belief, which was to dominate Egyptian faith for thousands of years, and to pass from it, by its own resurrection, into Christianity.<sup>2</sup> The body, Egypt believed, was inhabited by a small replica of itself called the *ka*, and also by a soul that dwelt in the body like a bird flitting among trees. All of these—body, *ka* and soul—survived the appearance of death; they could escape mortality for a time in proportion as the flesh was preserved from decay; but if they came to Osiris clean of all sin they would be permitted to live forever in the "Happy Field of Food"—those heavenly gardens where there would always be abundance and security: judge the harassed penury that spoke in this consoling dream. These Elysian Fields, however, could be reached only through the services of a ferryman, an Egyptian prototype of Charon; and this old gentleman would receive into his boat only such men and women as had done no evil in their lives. Or Osiris would question the dead, weighing each candidate's heart in the scale against a feather to test his truthfulness. Those who failed in this final examination would be condemned to lie forever in their tombs, hungering and thirsting, fed upon by hideous crocodiles, and never coming forth to see the sun.

According to the priests there were clever ways of passing these tests; and they offered to reveal these ways for a consideration. One was to fit up the tomb with food, drink and servants to nourish and help the dead. Another was to fill the tomb with talismans pleasing to the gods: fish, vultures, snakes, above all, the scarab—a beetle which, because it reproduced itself apparently with fertilization, typified the resurrected soul; if these were properly blessed by a priest they would frighten away every assailant, and annihilate every evil. A still better way was to buy the

*Book of the Dead*,\* scrolls for which the priests had written prayers, formulas and charms calculated to appease, even to deceive, Osiris. When, after a hundred vicissitudes and perils, the dead soul at last reached Osiris, it was to address the great Judge in some such manner as this:

O Thou who speedest Time's advancing wing,  
Thou dweller in all mysteries of life,  
Thou guardian of every word I speak—  
Behold, Thou art ashamed of me, thy son;  
Thy heart is full of sorrow and of shame,  
For that my sins were grievous in the world,  
And proud my wickedness and my transgression.  
Oh, be at peace with me, oh, be at peace,  
And break the barriers that loom between us!  
Let all my sins be washed away and fall  
Forgotten to the right and left of thee!  
Yea, do away with all my wickedness,  
And put away the shame that fills thy heart,  
That Thou and I henceforth may be at peace.<sup>251</sup>

Or the soul was to declare its innocence of all major sins, in a "Negative Confession" that represents for us one of the earliest and noblest expressions of the moral sense in man:

Hail to Thee, Great God, Lord of Truth and Justice! I have come before Thee, my Master; I have been brought to see thy beauties. . . . I bring unto you Truth. . . . I have not committed iniquity against men. I have not oppressed the poor. . . . I have not laid labor upon any free man beyond that which he wrought for himself. . . . I have not defaulted, I have not committed that which is an abomination to the gods. I have not caused the slave to be ill-treated of his master. I have not starved any man, I have not made any to weep, I have not assassinated any man, . . . I have not committed treason against any. I have not in aught diminished the sup-

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\* A modern title given by Lepsius to some two thousand papyrus rolls found in various tombs, and distinguished by containing formulas to guide the dead. The Egyptian title is *Coming Forth* (from death) *by Day*. They date from the Pyramids, but some are even older. The Egyptians believed that these texts had been composed by the god of wisdom, Thoth; chapter lxiv announced that the book had been found at Heliopolis, and was "in the very handwriting of the god."<sup>250</sup> Josiah made a similar discovery among the Jews; cf. Chap. xii, § v below.

plies of the temple; I have not spoiled the show-bread of the gods. . . . I have done no carnal act within the sacred enclosure of the temple. I have not blasphemed. . . . I have not falsified the balance. I have not taken away milk from the mouths of sucklings. I have . . . not taken with nets the birds of the gods . . . I am pure. I am pure. I am pure.<sup>123</sup>

For the most part, however, Egyptian religion had little to say about morality; the priests were busier selling charms, mumbling incantations, and performing magic rites than inculcating ethical precepts. Even the *Book of the Dead* teaches the faithful that charms blessed by the clergy will overcome all the obstacles that the deceased soul may encounter on its way to salvation; and the emphasis is rather on reciting the prayers than on living the good life. Says one roll: "If this can be known by the deceased he shall come forth by day"—i.e., rise to eternal life. Amulets and incantations were designed and sold to cover a multitude of sins and secure the entrance of the Devil himself into Paradise. At every step the pious Egyptian had to mutter strange formulas to avert evil and attract the good. Hear, for example, an anxious mother trying to drive out "demons" from her child:

Run out, thou who comest in darkness, who enterest in stealth. . . . Comest thou to kiss this child? I will not let thee kiss him. . . . Comest thou to take him away? I will not let thee take him away from me. I have made his protection against thee out of Efet-herb, which makes pain; out of onions, which harm thee; out of honey, which is sweet to the living and bitter to the dead; out of the evil parts of the Ebdu fish; out of the backbone of the perch.<sup>124</sup>

The gods themselves used magic and charms against one another. The literature of Egypt is full of magicians—of wizards who dry up lakes with a word, or cause severed limbs to jump back into place, or raise the dead.<sup>125</sup> The king had magicians to help or guide him; and he himself was believed to have a magical power to make the rain fall, or the river rise.<sup>126</sup> Life was full of talismans, spells, divinations; every door had to have a god to frighten away evil spirits or fortuitous strokes of bad luck. Children born on the twenty-third of the month of Thoth would surely die soon; those born on the twentieth of Choiakh would go blind.<sup>127</sup> "Each day and

month," says Herodotus, "is assigned to some particular god; and according to the day on which each person is born, they determine what will befall him, how he will die, and what kind of person he will be."<sup>7</sup> In the end the connection between morality and religion tended to be forgotten; the road to eternal bliss led not through a good life, but through magic, ritual, and generosity to the priests. Let a great Egyptologist express the matter:

The dangers of the hereafter were now greatly multiplied, and for every critical situation the priest was able to furnish the dead with an effective charm which would infallibly cure him. Besides many charms which enabled the dead to reach the world of the hereafter, there were those which prevented him from losing his mouth, his head, his heart; others which enabled him to remember his name, to breathe, eat, drink, avoid eating his own foulness, to prevent his drinking-water from turning into flame, to turn darkness into light, to ward off all serpents and other hostile monsters, and many others. . . . Thus the earliest moral development which we can trace in the ancient East was suddenly arrested, or at least checked, by the detestable devices of a corrupt priesthood eager for gain.<sup>88</sup>

Such was the state of religion in Egypt when Ikhnaton, poet and heretic, came to the throne, and inaugurated the religious revolution that destroyed the Empire of Egypt.

#### IV. THE HERETIC KING

*The character of Ikhnaton—The new religion—A hymn to the sun—Monotheism—The new dogma—The new art—Reaction—Nofretete—Break-up of the Empire—Death of Ikhnaton*

In the year 1380 B.C. Amenhotep III, who had succeeded Thutmose III, died after a life of wordly luxury and display, and was followed by his son Amenhotep IV, destined to be known as Ikhnaton. A profoundly revealing portrait-bust of him, discovered at Tell-el-Amarna, shows a profile of incredible delicacy, a face feminine in softness and poetic in its sensitivity. Large eyelids like a dreamer's, a long, misshapen skull, a frame slender and weak: here was a Shelley called to be a king.



He had hardly come to power when he began to revolt against the religion of Amon, and the practices of Amon's priests. In the great temple at Karnak there was now a large harem, supposedly the concubines of Amon, but in reality serving to amuse the clergy.<sup>289a</sup> The young emperor, whose private life was a model of fidelity, did not approve of this sacred harlotry; the blood of the ram slaughtered in sacrifice to Amon stank in his nostrils; and the traffic of the priests in magic and charms, and their use of the oracle of Amon to support religious obscurantism and political corruption<sup>290</sup> disgusted him to the point of violent protest. "More evil are the words of the priests," he said, "than those which I heard until the year IV" (of his reign); "more evil are they than those which King Amenhotep III heard."<sup>290</sup> His youthful spirit rebelled against the sordidness into which the religion of his people had fallen; he abominated the indecent wealth and lavish ritual of the temples, and the growing hold of a mercenary hierarchy on the nation's life. With a poet's audacity he threw compromise to the winds, and announced bravely that all these gods and ceremonies were a vulgar idolatry, that there was but one god—Aton.

Like Akbar in India thirty centuries later, Ikhnaton saw divinity above all in the sun, in the source of all earthly life and light. We cannot tell whether he had adopted his theory from Syria, and whether Aton was merely a form of Adonis. Of whatever origin, the new god filled the king's soul with delight; he changed his own name from Amenhotep, which contained the name of Amon, to Ikhnaton, meaning "Aton is satisfied"; and helping himself with old hymns, and certain monotheistic poems published in the preceding reign,\* he composed passionate songs to Aton, of which this, the longest and the best, is the fairest surviving remnant of Egyptian literature:

Thy dawning is beautiful in the horizon of the sky,  
O living Aton, Beginning of life.  
When thou risest in the eastern horizon,  
Thou fillest every land with thy beauty.

Thou art beautiful, great, glittering, high above every land,  
Thy rays, they encompass the land, even all that thou hast made.

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\* Under Amenhotep III the architects Suti and Hor had inscribed a monotheistic hymn to the sun upon a stele now in the British Museum.<sup>291</sup> It had long been the custom in Egypt to address the sun-god, Amon-Ra, as the greatest god,<sup>292</sup> but only as the god of Egypt.

Thou art Re, and thou carriest them all away captive;  
Thou bindest them by thy love.  
Though thou art far away, thy rays are upon earth;  
Though thou art on high, thy footprints are the day.

When thou settest in the western horizon of the sky,  
The earth is in darkness like the dead;  
They sleep in their chambers,  
Their heads are wrapped up,  
Their nostrils are stopped,  
And none seeth the other,  
All their things are stolen  
Which are under their heads,  
And they know it not.  
Every lion cometh forth from his den,  
All serpents they sting. . . .  
The world is in silence,  
He that made them resteth in his horizon.

Bright is the earth when thou risest in the horizon.  
When thou shinest as Aton by day  
Thou drivest away the darkness.  
When thou sendest forth thy rays,  
The Two Lands are in daily festivity,  
Awake and standing upon their feet  
When thou hast raised them up.  
Their limbs bathed, they take their clothing,  
Their arms uplifted in adoration to thy dawning.  
In all the world they do their work.

All cattle rest upon their pasturage,  
The trees and the plants flourish,  
The birds flutter in their marshes,  
Their wings uplifted in adoration to thee.  
All the sheep dance upon their feet,  
All winged things fly,  
They live when thou hast shone upon them.

The barks sail upstream and downstream.  
Every highway is open because thou dawnest.  
The fish in the river leap up before thee.  
Thy rays are in the midst of the great green sea.

Creator of the germ in woman,  
Maker of seed in man,  
Giving life to the son in the body of his mother,  
Soothing him that he may not weep,  
Nurse even in the womb,  
Giver of breath to animate every one that he maketh!  
When he cometh forth from the body . . . on the day of his birth,  
Thou openest his mouth in speech,  
Thou suppliest his necessities.

When the fledgling in the egg chirps in the egg,  
Thou givest him breath therein to preserve him alive.  
When thou hast brought him together  
To the point of bursting the egg,  
He cometh forth from the egg,  
To chirp with all his might.  
He goeth about upon his two feet  
When he hath come forth therefrom.

How manifold are thy works!  
They are hidden from before us,  
O sole god, whose powers no other possesseth.  
Thou didst create the earth according to thy heart  
While thou wast alone:  
Men, all cattle large and small,  
All that are upon the earth,  
That go about upon their feet;  
All that are on high,  
That fly with their wings.  
The foreign countries, Syria and Kush,  
The land of Egypt;  
Thou settest every man into his place,  
Thou suppliest their necessities. . . .

Thou makest the Nile in the nether world,  
Thou bringest it as thou desirest,  
To preserve alive the people. . . .

How excellent are thy designs,  
O Lord of eternity!  
There is a Nile in the sky for the strangers  
And for the cattle of every country that go upon their feet. . . .

Thy rays nourish every garden;  
When thou risest they live,  
They grow by thee.  
Thou makest the seasons  
In order to create all thy work:  
Winter to bring them coolness,  
And heat that they may taste thee.  
Thou didst make the distant sky to rise therein,  
In order to behold all that thou hast made,  
Thou alone, shining in the form as living Aton,

Dawning, glittering, going afar and returning.  
Thou makest millions of forms  
Through thyself alone;  
Cities, towns and tribes,  
Highways and rivers.  
All eyes see thee before them,  
For thou art Aton of the day over the earth. . . .

Thou art in my heart,  
There is no other that knoweth thee  
Save thy son Ikhnaton.  
Thou hast made him wise  
In thy designs and in thy might.  
The world is in thy hand,  
Even as thou hast made them.  
When thou hast risen they live,  
When thou settest they die;  
For thou art length of life of thyself,  
Men live through thee,  
While their eyes are upon thy beauty  
Until thou settest.  
All labor is put away  
When thou settest in the west. . . .

Thou didst establish the world,  
And raised them up for thy son. . . .  
Ikhnaton, whose life is long;  
And for the chief royal wife, his beloved,  
Mistress of the Two Lands,  
Nefer-nefru-aton, Nofretete,  
Living and flourishing for ever and ever.<sup>209</sup>

This is not only one of the great poems of history, it is the first outstanding expression of monotheism—seven hundred years before Isaiah.\* Perhaps, as Breasted<sup>20</sup> suggests, this conception of one sole god was a reflex of the unification of the Mediterranean world under Egypt by Thutmose III. Ikhnaton conceives his god as belonging to all nations equally, and even names other countries before his own as in Aton's care; this was an astounding advance upon the old tribal deities. Note the vitalistic conception: Aton is to be found not in battles and victories but in flowers and trees, in all forms of life and growth; Aton is the joy that causes the young sheep to "dance upon their legs," and the birds to "flutter in their marshes." Nor is the god a person limited to human form; the real divinity is the creative and nourishing *heat* of the sun; the flaming glory of the rising or setting orb is but an emblem of that ultimate power. Nevertheless, because of its omnipresent, fertilizing beneficence, the sun becomes to Ikhnaton also the "Lord of love," the tender nurse that "creates the man-child in woman," and "fills the Two Lands of Egypt with love." So at last Aton grows by symbolism into a solicitous father, compassionate and tender; not, like Yahveh, a Lord of Hosts, but a god of gentleness and peace.<sup>20a</sup>

It is one of the tragedies of history that Ikhnaton, having achieved his elevating vision of universal unity, was not satisfied to let the noble quality of his new religion slowly win the hearts of men. He was unable to think of his truth in relative terms; the thought came to him that other forms of belief and worship were indecent and intolerable. Suddenly he gave orders that the names of all gods but Aton should be erased and chiseled from every public inscription in Egypt; he mutilated his father's name from a hundred monuments to cut from it the word *Amon*; he declared all creeds but his own illegal, and commanded that all the old temples should be closed. He abandoned Thebes as unclean, and built for himself a beautiful new capital at Akhetaton—"City of the Horizon of Aton."

Rapidly Thebes decayed as the offices and emoluments of government were taken from it, and Akhetaton became a rich metropolis, busy with fresh building and a Renaissance of arts liberated from the priestly bondage of tradition. The joyous spirit expressed in the new religion passed over into its art. At Tell-el-Amarna, a modern village on the site of Akhetaton,

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\* The obvious similarity of this hymn to Psalm CIV leaves little doubt of Egyptian influence upon the Hebrew poet.<sup>20a</sup>

Sir William Flinders Petrie uncarthed a beautiful pavement, adorned with birds, fishes and other animals painted with the most delicate grace.<sup>207</sup> Ikhnaton forbade the artists to make images of Aton, on the lofty ground that the true god has no form;<sup>208</sup> for the rest he left art free, merely asking his favorite artists, Bek, Auta and Nutnose, to describe things as they saw them, and to forget the conventions of the priests. They took him at his word, and represented him as a youth of gentle, almost timid, face, and strangely dolichocephalic head. Taking their lead from his vitalistic conception of deity, they painted every form of plant and animal life with loving detail, and with a perfection hardly surpassed in any other place or time.<sup>209</sup> For a while art, which in every generation knows the pangs of hunger and obscurity, flourished in abundance and happiness.

Had Ikhnaton been a mature mind he would have realized that the change which he had proposed from a superstitious polytheism deeply rooted in the needs and habits of the people to a naturalistic monotheism that subjected imagination to intelligence, was too profound to be effected in a little time; he would have made haste slowly, and softened the transition with intermediate steps. But he was a poet rather than a philosopher; like Shelley announcing the demise of Yahveh to the bishops of Oxford, he grasped for the Absolute, and brought the whole structure of Egypt down upon his head.

At one blow he had dispossessed and alienated a wealthy and powerful priesthood, and had forbidden the worship of deities made dear by long tradition and belief. When he had *Amon* hacked out from his father's name it seemed to his people a blasphemous impiety; nothing could be more vital to them than the honoring of the ancestral dead. He had underestimated the strength and pertinacity of the priests, and he had exaggerated the capacity of the people to understand a natural religion. Behind the scenes the priests plotted and prepared; and in the seclusion of their homes the populace continued to worship their ancient and innumerable gods. A hundred crafts that had depended upon the temples muttered in secret against the heretic. Even in his palace his ministers and generals hated him, and prayed for his death, for was he not allowing the Empire to fall to pieces in his hands?

Meanwhile the young poet lived in simplicity and trust. He had seven daughters, but no son; and though by law he might have sought an heir by his secondary wives, he would not, but preferred to remain faithful to Nofretete. A little ornament has come down to us that shows him

embracing the Queen; he allowed artists to depict him riding in a chariot through the streets, engaged in pleasantries with his wife and children; on ceremonial occasions the Queen sat beside him and held his hand, while their daughters frolicked at the foot of the throne. He spoke of his wife as "Mistress of his Happiness, at hearing whose voice the King rejoices"; and for an oath he used the phrase, "As my heart is happy in the Queen and her children."<sup>20</sup> It was a tender interlude in Egypt's epic of power.

Into this simple happiness came alarming messages from Syria.<sup>1</sup> The dependencies of Egypt in the Near East were being invaded by Hittites and other neighboring tribes; the governors appointed by Egypt pleaded for immediate reinforcements. Ikhnaton hesitated; he was not quite sure that the right of conquest warranted him in keeping these states in subjection to Egypt; and he was loath to send Egyptians to die on distant fields for so uncertain a cause. When the dependencies saw that they were dealing with a saint, they deposed their Egyptian governors, quietly stopped all payment of tribute, and became to all effects free. Almost in a moment Egypt ceased to be a vast Empire, and shrank back into a little state. Soon the Egyptian treasury, which had for a century depended upon foreign tribute as its mainstay, was empty; domestic taxation had fallen to a minimum, and the working of the gold mines had stopped. Internal administration was in chaos. Ikhnaton found himself penniless and friendless in a world that had seemed all his own. Every colony was in revolt, and every power in Egypt was arrayed against him, waiting for his fall.

He was hardly thirty when, in 1362 B.C., he died, broken with the realization of his failure as a ruler, and the unworthiness of his race.

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<sup>1</sup> In 1893 Sir William Flinders Petrie discovered at Tell-el-Amarna over three hundred and fifty cuneiform letter-tablets, most of which were appeals for aid addressed to Ikhnaton by the East.

## V. DECLINE AND FALL

*Tutenkhamon—The labors of Rameses II—The wealth of the clergy—The poverty of the people—The conquest of Egypt—Summary of Egyptian contributions to civilization*

Two years after his death his son-in-law, Tutenkhamon, a favorite of the priests, ascended the throne. He changed the name Tutenkhaton which his father-in-law had given him, returned the capital to Thebes, made his peace with the powers of the Church, and announced to a rejoicing people the restoration of the ancient gods. The words *Aton* and *Ikhnaton* were effaced from all the monuments, the priests forbade the name of the heretic king to pass any man's lips, and the people referred to him as "The Great Criminal." The names that Ikhnaton had removed were recarved upon the monuments, and the feast-days that he had abolished were renewed. Everything was as before.

For the rest Tutenkhamon reigned without distinction; the world would hardly have heard of him had not unprecedented treasures been found in his grave. After him a doughty general, Harmhab, marched his armies up and down the coast, restoring Egypt's external power and internal peace. Seti I wisely reaped the fruits of renewed order and wealth, built the Hypostyle Hall at Karnak,<sup>m</sup> began to cut a mighty temple into the cliffs at Abu Simbel, commemorated his grandeur in magnificent reliefs, and had the pleasure of lying for thousands of years in one of the most ornate of Egypt's tombs.

At this point the romantic Rameses II, last of the great Pharaohs, mounted the throne. Seldom has history known so picturesque a monarch. Handsome and brave, he added to his charms by his boyish consciousness of them; and his exploits in war, which he never tired of recording, were equaled only by his achievements in love. After brushing aside a brother who had inopportune rights to the throne, he sent an expedition to Nubia to tap the gold mines there and replenish the treasury of Egypt; and with the resultant funds he undertook the reconquest of the Asiatic provinces, which had again rebelled. Three years he gave to recovering Palestine; then he pushed on, met a great army of the Asiatic allies at Kadesh (1288 B.C.), and turned defeat into victory by his courage and leadership. It may have been as a result of these campaigns that a considerable number of Jews were brought into Egypt, as slaves or as immigrants; and Rameses II



is believed by some to have been the Pharaoh of the Exodus.<sup>23</sup> He had his victories commemorated, without undue impartiality, on half a hundred walls, commissioned a poet to celebrate him in epic verse, and rewarded himself with several hundred wives. When he died he left one hundred sons and fifty daughters to testify to his quality by their number and their proportion. He married several of his daughters, so that they too might have splendid children. His offspring were so numerous that they constituted for four hundred years a special class in Egypt, from which, for over a century, her rulers were chosen.

He deserved these consolations, for he seems to have ruled Egypt well. He built so lavishly that half the surviving edifices of Egypt are ascribed to his reign. He completed the main hall at Karnak, added to the temple of Luxor, raised his own vast shrine, the Ramesseum, west of the river, finished the great mountain-sanctuary at Abu Simbel, and scattered colossi of himself throughout the land. Commerce flourished under him, both across the Isthmus of Suez and on the Mediterranean. He built another canal from the Nile to the Red Sea, but the shifting sands filled it up soon after his death. He yielded up his life in 1225 B.C., aged ninety, after one of the most remarkable reigns of history.

Only one human power in Egypt had excelled his, and that was the clergy: here, as everywhere in history, ran the endless struggle between church and state. Throughout his reign and those of his immediate successors, the spoils of every war, and the lion's share of taxes from the conquered provinces, went to the temples and the priests. These reached the zenith of their wealth under Rameses III. They possessed at that time 107,000 slaves—one-thirtieth of the population of Egypt; they held 750,000 acres—one-seventh of all the arable land; they owned 500,000 head of cattle; they received the revenues from 169 towns in Egypt and Syria; and all this property was exempt from taxation.<sup>24</sup> The generous or timorous Rameses III showered unparalleled gifts upon the priests of Amon, including 32,000 kilograms of gold and a million kilograms of silver;<sup>25</sup> every year he gave them 185,000 sacks of corn. When the time came to pay the workmen employed by the state he found his treasury empty.<sup>26</sup> More and more the people starved in order that the gods might eat.

Under such a policy it was only a matter of time before the kings would become the servants of the priests. In the reign of the last Ramessid king the High Priest of Amon usurped the throne and ruled as openly

supreme; the Empire became a stagnant theocracy in which architecture and superstition flourished, and every other element in the national life decayed. Omens were manipulated to give a divine sanction to every decision of the clergy. The most vital forces of Egypt were sucked dry by the thirst of the gods at the very time when foreign invaders were preparing to sweep down upon all this concentrated wealth.

For meanwhile on every frontier trouble brewed. The prosperity of the country had come in part from its strategic place on the main line of Mediterranean trade; its metals and wealth had given it mastery over Libya on the west, and over Phœnicia, Syria and Palestine on the north and east. But now at the other end of this trade route—in Assyria, Babylon and Persia—new nations were growing to maturity and power, were strengthening themselves with invention and enterprise, and were daring to compete in commerce and industry with the self-satisfied and pious Egyptians. The Phœnicians were perfecting the trireme galley, and with it were gradually wresting from Egypt the control of the sea. The Dorians and Achæans had conquered Crete and the Ægean (ca. 1400 B.C.), and were establishing a commercial empire of their own; trade moved less and less in slow caravans over the difficult and robber-infested mountains and deserts of the Near East; it moved more and more, at less expense and with less loss, in ships that passed through the Black Sea and the Ægean to Troy, Crete and Greece, at last to Carthage, Italy and Spain. The nations along the northern shores of the Mediterranean ripened and blossomed, the nations on the southern shores faded and rotted away. Egypt lost her trade, her gold, her power, her art, at last even her pride; one by one her rivals crept down upon her soil, harassed and conquered her, and laid her waste.

In 954 B.C. the Libyans came in from the western hills, and laid about them with fury; in 722 the Ethiopians entered from the south, and avenged their ancient slavery; in 674 the Assyrians swept down from the north and subjected priest-ridden Egypt to tribute. For a time Psamtik, Prince of Saïs, repelled the invaders, and brought Egypt together again under his leadership. During his long reign, and those of his successors, came the "Saïte Revival" of Egyptian art: the architects and sculptors, poets and scientists of Egypt gathered up the technical and esthetic traditions of their schools, and prepared to lay them at the feet of the Greeks. But in 525 B.C. the Persians under Cambyses crossed Suez, and again put an end to Egyptian independence. In 332 B.C. Alexander sallied out of Asia, and

made Egypt a province of Macedon.\* In 48 B.C. Cæsar arrived to capture Egypt's new capital, Alexandria, and to give to Cleopatra the son and heir whom they vainly hoped to crown as the unifying monarch of the greatest empires of antiquity.<sup>577</sup> In 30 B.C. Egypt became a province of Rome, and disappeared from history.

For a time it flourished again when saints peopled the desert, and Cyril dragged Hypatia to her death in the streets (415 A.D.); and again when the Moors marched into it, built Cairo (ca. 650 A.D.) with the ruins of Memphis, and filled it with bright-domed mosques and citadels. But these were alien cultures not really Egypt's own, and they too passed away. Today there is a place called Egypt, but the Egyptian people are not masters there; long since they have been broken by conquest, and merged in language and marriage with their Arab conquerors; their cities know only the authority of Moslems and Englishmen, and the feet of weary pilgrims who travel thousands of miles to find that the Pyramids are merely heaps of stones. Perhaps greatness could grow there again if Asia should once more become rich, and make Egypt the half-way house of the planet's trade. But of the morrow, as Lorenzo sang, there is no certainty; and today the only certainty is decay. On all sides gigantic ruins, monuments and tombs, memorials of a savage and titanic energy; on all sides poverty and desolation, and the exhaustion of an ancient blood. And on all sides the hostile, engulfing sands, blown about forever by hot winds, and grimly resolved to cover everything in the end.

Nevertheless the sands have destroyed only the body of ancient Egypt; its spirit survives in the lore and memory of our race. The improvement of agriculture, metallurgy, industry and engineering; the apparent invention of glass and linen, of paper and ink, of the calendar and the clock, of geometry and the alphabet; the refinement of dress and ornament, of furniture and dwellings, of society and life; the remarkable development of orderly and peaceful government, of census and post, of primary and secondary education, even of technical training for office and administration; the advancement of writing and literature, of science and medicine; the first clear formulation known to us of individual and public conscience, the first cry for social justice, the first widespread monogamy, the first monotheism, the first essays in moral philosophy; the elevation of

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\* The history of classical Egyptian civilization under the Ptolemies and the Cæsars belongs to a later volume.

architecture, sculpture and the minor arts to a degree of excellence and power never (so far as we know) reached before, and seldom equaled since: these contributions were not lost, even when their finest exemplars were buried under the desert, or overthrown by some convulsion of the globe.\* Through the Phœnicians, the Syrians and the Jews, through the Cretans, the Greeks and the Romans, the civilization of Egypt passed down to become part of the cultural heritage of mankind. The effect or remembrance of what Egypt accomplished at the very dawn of history has influence in every nation and every age. "It is even possible," as Faure has said, "that Egypt, through the solidarity, the unity, and the disciplined variety of its artistic products, through the enormous duration and the sustained power of its effort, offers the spectacle of the greatest civilization that has yet appeared on the earth."<sup>222</sup> We shall do well to equal it.

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\* Thebes was finally destroyed by an earthquake in 27 B.C.

# Babylonia

## I. FROM HAMMURABI TO NEBUCHADREZZAR

*Babylonian contributions to modern civilization—The Land between the Rivers — Hammurabi — His capital — The Kassite Domination—The Amarna letters—The Assyrian Conquest—Nebuchadrezzar—Babylon in the days of its glory*

CIVILIZATION, like life, is a perpetual struggle with death. And as life maintains itself only by abandoning old, and recasting itself in younger and fresher, forms, so civilization achieves a precarious survival by changing its habitat or its blood. It moved from Ur to Babylon and Judea, from Babylon to Nineveh, from these to Persepolis, Sardis and Miletus, and from these, Egypt and Crete to Greece and Rome.

No one looking at the site of ancient Babylon today would suspect that these hot and dreary wastes along the Euphrates were once the rich and powerful capital of a civilization that almost created astronomy, added richly to the progress of medicine, established the science of language, prepared the first great codes of law, taught the Greeks the rudiments of mathematics, physics and philosophy,<sup>1</sup> gave the Jews the mythology which they gave to the world, and passed on to the Arabs part of that scientific and architectural lore with which they aroused the dormant soul of medieval Europe. Standing before the silent Tigris and Euphrates one finds it hard to believe that they are the same rivers that watered Sumeria and Akkad, and nourished the Hanging Gardens of Babylon.

In some ways they are not the same rivers: not only because "one never steps twice into the same stream," but because these old rivers have long since remade their beds along new courses," and "mow with their scythes of whiteness"<sup>2</sup> other shores. As in Egypt the Nile, so here the Tigris and the Euphrates provided, for thousands of miles, an avenue of commerce and—in their southern reaches—springtime inundations that helped the peasant to fertilize his soil. For rain comes to Babylonia only in the winter

months; from May to November it comes not at all; and the earth, but for the overflow of the rivers, would be as arid as northern Mesopotamia was then and is today. Through the abundance of the rivers and the toil of many generations of men, Babylonia became the Eden of Semitic legend, the garden and granary of western Asia.\*

Historically and ethnically Babylonia was a product of the union of the Akkadians and the Sumerians. Their mating generated the Babylonian type, in which the Akkadian Semitic strain proved dominant; their warfare ended in the triumph of Akkad, and the establishment of Babylon as the capital of all lower Mesopotamia. At the outset of this history stands the powerful figure of Hammurabi (2123-2081 B.C.) conqueror and law-giver through a reign of forty-three years. Primeval seals and inscriptions transmit him to us partially—a youth full of fire and genius, a very whirlwind in battle, who crushes all rebels, cuts his enemies into pieces, marches over inaccessible mountains, and never loses an engagement. Under him the petty warring states of the lower valley were forced into unity and peace, and disciplined into order and security by an historic code of laws.

The Code of Hammurabi was unearthed at Susa in 1902, beautifully engraved upon a diorite cylinder that had been carried from Babylon to Elam (ca. 1100 B.C.) as a trophy of war.† Like that of Moses, this legislation was a gift from Heaven, for one side of the cylinder shows the King receiving the laws from Shamash, the Sun-god himself. The Prologue is almost in Heaven:

When the lofty Anu, King of the Anunaki and Bel, Lord of Heaven and Earth, he who determines the destiny of the land, committed the rule of all mankind to Marduk; . . . when they pronounced the lofty name of Babylon; when they made it famous among the quarters of the world and in its midst established an everlasting kingdom whose foundations were firm as heaven and earth—at that time Anu and Bel called me, Hammurabi, the exalted prince, the worshiper of the gods, to cause justice to prevail in the land, to destroy the wicked and the evil, *to prevent the strong from oppressing the weak, . . . to enlighten the land and to further the welfare of the people.* Hammurabi, the governor named by Bel, am I, who brought about plenty and abundance; who made

\* The Euphrates is one of the four rivers which, according to *Genesis* (ii, 14), flowed through Paradise.

† It is now in the Louvre.

everything for Nippur and Durilu complete; . . . who gave life to the city of Uruk; who supplied water in abundance to its inhabitants; . . . who made the city of Borsippa beautiful; . . . who stored up grain for the mighty Urash; . . . who helped his people in time of need; who establishes in security their property in Babylon; the governor of the people, *the servant*, whose deeds are pleasing to Anunit.<sup>4</sup>

The words here arbitrarily underlined have a modern ring; one would not readily attribute them to an Oriental "despot" 2100 B.C., or suspect that the laws that they introduce were based upon Sumerian prototypes now six thousand years old. This ancient origin combined with Babylonian circumstance to give the Code a composite and heterogeneous character. It begins with compliments to the gods, but takes no further notice of them in its astonishingly secular legislation. It mingles the most enlightened laws with the most barbarous punishments, and sets the primitive *lex talionis* and trial by ordeal alongside elaborate judicial procedures and a discriminating attempt to limit marital tyranny.<sup>5</sup> All in all, these 285 laws, arranged almost scientifically under the headings of Personal Property, Real Estate, Trade and Business, the Family, Injuries, and Labor, form a code more advanced and civilized than that of Assyria a thousand and more years later, and in many respects "as good as that of a modern European state."<sup>6</sup> There are few words finer in the history of law than those with which the great Babylonian brings his legislation to a close:

The righteous laws which Hammurabi, the wise king, established, and (by which) he gave the land stable support and pure government. . . . I am the guardian governor. . . . In my bosom I carried the people of the land of Sumer and Akkad; . . . in my wisdom I restrained them, that the strong might not oppress the weak, and that they should give justice to the orphan and the widow. . . . Let any oppressed man, who has a cause, come before my image as king of righteousness! Let him read the inscription on my monument! Let him give heed to my weighty words! And may my monument enlighten him as to his cause, and may he understand his case! May he set his heart at ease, (exclaiming:) "Ham-

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<sup>4</sup> The "Mosaic Code" apparently borrows from it, or derives with it from a common original. The habit of stamping a legal contract with an official seal goes back to Hammurabi.<sup>7</sup>

murabi indeed is a ruler who is like a real father to his people; . . . he has established prosperity for his people for all time, and given a pure government to the land." . . .

In the days that are yet to come, for all future time, may the king who is in the land observe the words of righteousness which I have written upon my monument!"

This unifying legislation was but one of Hammurabi's accomplishments. At his command a great canal was dug between Kish and the Persian Gulf, thereby irrigating a large area of land, and protecting the cities of the south from the destructive floods which the Tigris had been wont to visit upon them. In another inscription which has found its devious way from his time to ours he tells us proudly how he gave water (that noble and unappreciated commonplace, which was once a luxury), security and government to many tribes. Even through the boasting (an honest mannerism of the Orient) we hear the voice of statesmanship.

When Anu and Enlil (the gods of Uruk and Nippur) gave me the lands of Sumer and Akkad to rule, and they entrusted this sceptre to me, I dug the canal *Hammurabi-nukhush-nishi* (Hammurabi-the-Abundance-of-the-People), which bringeth copious water to the land of Sumer and Akkad. Its banks on both sides I turned into cultivated ground; I heaped up piles of grain, I provided unfailing water for the lands. . . . The scattered people I gathered, with pasturage and water I provided them; I pastured them with abundance, and settled them in peaceful dwellings."

Despite the secular quality of his laws Hammurabi was clever enough to gild his authority with the approval of the gods. He built temples as well as forts, and coddled the clergy by constructing at Babylon a gigantic sanctuary for Marduk and his wife (the national deities), and a massive granary to store up wheat for gods and priests. These and similar gifts were an astute investment, from which he expected steady returns in the awed obedience of the people. From their taxes he financed the forces of law and order, and had enough left over to beautify his capital. Palaces and temples rose on every hand; a bridge spanned the Euphrates to let the city spread itself along both banks; ships manned with ninety men plied up



and down the river. Two thousand years before Christ Babylon was already one of the richest cities that history had yet known.\*

The people were of Semitic appearance, dark in hair and features, masculinely bearded for the most part, and occasionally bewigged. Both sexes wore the hair long; sometimes even the men dangled curls; frequently the men, as well as the women, disguised themselves with perfumes. The common dress for both sexes was a white linen tunic reaching to the feet; in the women it left one shoulder bare, in the men it was augmented with mantle and robe. As wealth grew, the people developed a taste for color, and dyed for themselves garments of blue on red, or red on blue, in stripes, circles, checks or dots. The bare feet of the Sumerian period gave way to shapely sandals, and the male head, in Hammurabi's time, was swathed in turbans. The women wore necklaces, bracelets and amulets, and strings of beads in their carefully coiffured hair; the men flourished walking-sticks with carved heads, and carried on their girdles the prettily designed seals with which they attested their letters and documents. The priests wore tall conical caps to conceal their humanity.<sup>9</sup>

It is almost a law of history that the same wealth that generates a civilization announces its decay. For wealth produces ease as well as art; it softens a people to the ways of luxury and peace, and invites invasion from stronger arms and hungrier mouths. On the eastern boundary of the new state a hardy tribe of mountaineers, the Kassites, looked with envy upon the riches of Babylon. Eight years after Hammurabi's death they inundated the land, plundered it, retreated, raided it again and again, and finally settled down in it as conquerors and rulers; this is the normal origin of aristocracies. They were of non-Semitic stock, perhaps descendants of European immigrants from neolithic days; their victory over Semitic Babylon represented one more swing of the racial pendulum in western Asia. For several centuries Babylonia lived in an ethnic and political chaos that put a stop to the development of science and art.<sup>10</sup> We have a kaleidoscope of this stifling disorder in the "Amarna" letters, in which the kinglets of Babylonia and Syria, having sent modest tribute to imperial Egypt after the victories of Thutmose III, beg for aid against rebels and invaders, and quarrel about the value of the gifts that they exchange

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\* "In all essentials Babylonia, in the time of Hammurabi, and even earlier, had reached a pitch of material civilization which has never since been surpassed in Asia."—Christopher Dawson, *Enquiries into Religion and Culture*, New York, 1933, p. 107. Perhaps we should except the ages of Xerxes I in Persia, Ming Huang in China, and Akbar in India.

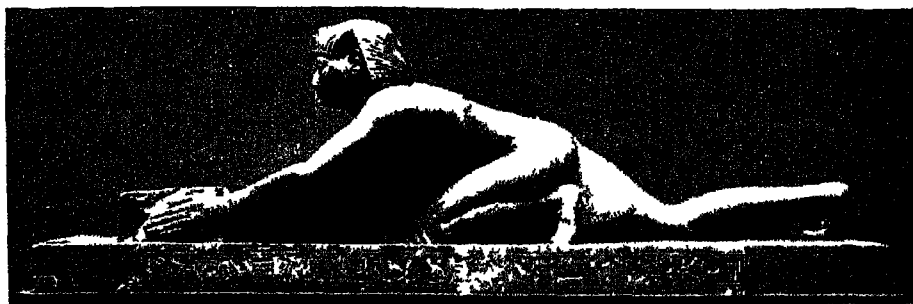


FIG. 19—*Rameses II presenting an offering*  
Cairo Museum; photo by Metropolitan Museum of Art



FIG. 20—*Bronze figure of the*  
*Lady Tekoschet*



FIG. 21—*Seated figure of*  
*Montumihait*

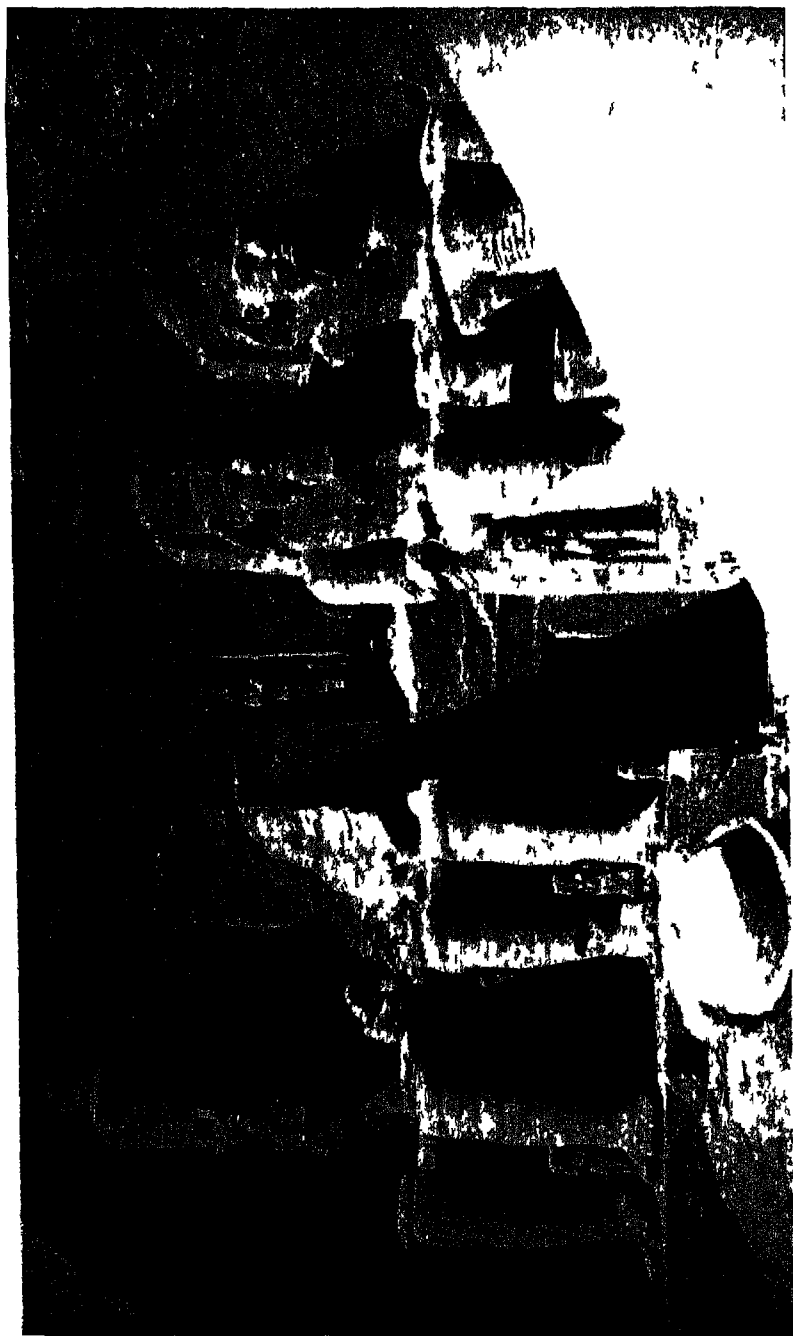


FIG. 22.—Colossi of Ramesses II, with life-size figures of Queen Nefertete at his feet,  
at the cave temple of Abu Simbel  
Ewing Galloway, N Y



FIG. 23—*The dancing girl. Design on an ostracon*  
Turin Museum, Italy

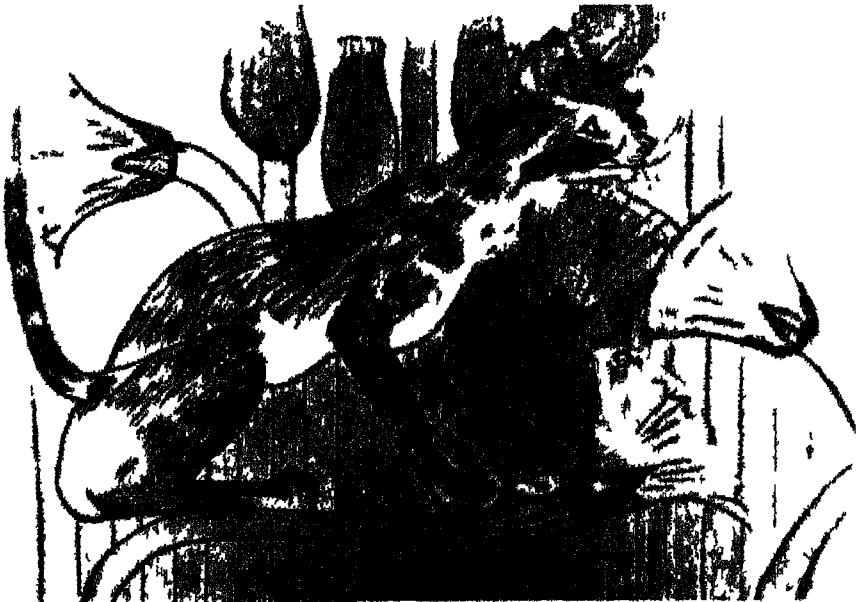


FIG. 24—*Cat watching his prey. A wall-painting in the grave of Khnumhotep*  
*at Beni-Hasan*

Conv. by Howard Carter; courtesy of Egypt Exploration Society



FIG. 25—*Chair of Tutankhamon*  
Cairo Museum; photo by Metropolitan Museum of Art

with the disdainful Amenhotep III and the absorbed and negligent Ikhnaton.\*

The Kassites were expelled after almost six centuries of rule as disruptive as the similar sway of the Hyksos in Egypt. The disorder continued for four hundred years more under obscure Babylonian rulers, whose polysyllabic roster might serve as an *obbligato* to Gray's *Elegy*,† until the rising power of Assyria in the north stretched down its hand and brought Babylonia under the kings of Nineveh. When Babylon rebelled, Sennacherib destroyed it almost completely; but the genial despotism of Esarhaddon restored it to prosperity and culture. The rise of the Medes weakened Assyria, and with their help Nabopolassar liberated Babylonia, set up an independent dynasty, and dying, bequeathed this second Babylonian kingdom to his son Nebuchadrezzar II, villain of the vengeful and legendary *Book of Daniel*.‡ Nebuchadrezzar's inaugural address to Marduk, god-in-chief of Babylon, reveals a glimpse of an Oriental monarch's aims and character:

As my precious life do I love thy sublime appearance! Outside of my city Babylon, I have not selected among all settlements any dwelling. . . . At thy command, O merciful Marduk, may the house that I have built endure forever, may I be satiated with its splendor, attain old age therein, with abundant offspring, and receive therein tribute of the kings of all regions, from all mankind.<sup>14</sup>

He lived almost up to his hopes, for though illiterate and not unquestionably sane, he became the most powerful ruler of his time in the Near East, and the greatest warrior, statesman and builder in all the succession of Babylonian kings after Hammurabi himself. When Egypt conspired with Assyria to reduce Babylonia to vassalage again, Nebuchad-

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\* The Amarna letters are dreary reading, full of adulation, argument, entreaty and complaint. Hear, e.g., Burraburiash II, King of Karduniash (in Mesopotamia), writing to Amenhotep III about an exchange of royal gifts in which Burraburiash seems to have been worsted: "Ever since my mother and thy father sustained friendly relations with one another, they exchanged valuable presents; and the choicest desire, each of the other, they did not refuse. Now my brother (Amenhotep) has sent me as a present (only) two *manehs* of gold. But send me as much gold as thy father; and if it be less, let it be half of what thy father would send. Why didst thou send me only two *manehs* of gold?"<sup>15</sup>

† Marduk-shapik-zeri, Ninurta-nadin-sham, Enlil-nadin-apli, Iti-Marduk-balaru, Marduk-shapik-zer-mati, etc. Doubtless our own full names, linked with such hyphens, would make a like cacophony to alien ears.

rezzar met the Egyptian hosts at Carchemish (on the upper reaches of the Euphrates), and almost annihilated them. Palestine and Syria then fell easily under his sway, and Babylonian merchants controlled all the trade that flowed across western Asia from the Persian Gulf to the Mediterranean Sea.

Nebuchadrezzar spent the tolls of this trade, the tributes of these subjects, and the taxes of his people, in beautifying his capital and assuaging the hunger of the priests. "Is not this the great Babylon that I built?"<sup>18</sup> He resisted the temptation to be merely a conqueror; he sallied forth occasionally to teach his subjects the virtues of submission, but for the most part he stayed at home, making Babylon the unrivaled capital of the Near East, the largest and most magnificent metropolis of the ancient world.<sup>19</sup> Nabopolassar had laid plans for the reconstruction of the city; Nebuchadrezzar used his long reign of forty-three years to carry them to completion. Herodotus, who saw Babylon a century and a half later, described it as "standing in a spacious plain," and surrounded by a wall fifty-six miles in length,<sup>20</sup> so broad that a four-horse chariot could be driven along the top, and enclosing an area of some two hundred square miles.<sup>21</sup> Through the center of the town ran the palm-fringed Euphrates, busy with commerce and spanned by a handsome bridge.<sup>22</sup>† Practically all the better buildings were of brick, for stone was rare in Mesopotamia; but the bricks were often faced with enameled tiles of brilliant blue, yellow or white, adorned with animal and other figures in glazed relief, which remain to this day supreme in their kind. Nearly all the bricks so far recovered from the site of Babylon bear the proud inscription: "I am Nebuchadrezzar, King of Babylon."<sup>23</sup>

Approaching the city the traveler saw first—at the crown of a very mountain of masonry—an immense and lofty *ziggurat*, rising in seven stages of gleaming enamel to a height of 650 feet, crowned with a shrine containing a massive table of solid gold, and an ornate bed on which, each night, some woman slept to await the pleasure of the god.<sup>24</sup> This structure, taller than the pyramids of Egypt, and surpassing in height all but the latest of modern buildings, was probably the "Tower of Babel" of Hebraic myth, the many-storied audacity of a people who did not know

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\* Probably this included not only the city proper but a large agricultural hinterland within the walls, designed to provide the teeming metropolis with sustenance in time of siege. \*

† If we may trust Diodorus Siculus, a tunnel fifteen feet wide and twelve feet high connected the two banks.<sup>25</sup>

Yahveh, and whom the God of Hosts was supposed to have confounded with a multiplicity of tongues.\* South of the *ziggurat* stood the gigantic Temple of Marduk, tutelary deity of Babylon. Around and below this temple the city spread itself out in a few wide and brilliant avenues, crossed by crowded canals and narrow winding streets alive, no doubt, with traffic and bazaars, and Orientally odorous with garbage and humanity. Connecting the temples was a spacious "Sacred Way," paved with asphalt-covered bricks overlaid with flags of limestone and red *breccia*; over this the gods might pass without muddying their feet. This broad avenue was flanked with walls of colored tile, on which stood out, in low relief, one hundred and twenty brightly enameled lions, snarling to keep the impious away. At one end of the Sacred Way rose the magnificent Ishtar Gate, a massive double portal of resplendent tiles, adorned with enameled flowers and animals of admirable color, vitality, and line.†

Six hundred yards north of the "Tower of Babel" rose a mound called Kasr, on which Nebuchadrezzar built the most imposing of his palaces. At its center stood his principal dwelling-place, the walls of finely made yellow brick, the floors of white and mottled sandstone; reliefs of vivid blue glaze adorned the surfaces, and gigantic basalt lions guarded the entrance. Nearby, supported on a succession of superimposed circular colonnades, were the famous Hanging Gardens, which the Greeks included among the Seven Wonders of the World. The gallant Nebuchadrezzar had built them for one of his wives, the daughter of Cyaxares, King of the Medes; this princess, unaccustomed to the hot sun and dust of Babylon, pined for the verdure of her native hills. The topmost terrace was covered with rich soil to the depth of many feet, providing space and nourishment not merely for varied flowers and plants, but for the largest and most deep-rooted trees. Hydraulic engines concealed in the columns and manned by shifts of slaves carried water from the Euphrates to the highest tier of the gardens.<sup>24</sup> Here, seventy-five feet above the ground, in the cool shade of tall trees, and surrounded by exotic shrubs and fragrant flowers, the ladies of the royal harem walked unveiled, secure from the common eye; while, in the plains and streets below, the common man and woman ploughed, wove, built, carried burdens, and reproduced their kind.

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\* *Babel*, however, does not mean confusion or babble, as the legend supposes; as used in the word *Babylon* it meant the Gate of God.<sup>25</sup>

† A reconstruction of the Ishtar Gate can be seen in the Vorderasiatisches Museum, Berlin.



## II. THE TOILERS

*Hunting — Tillage — Food — Industry — Transport — The perils  
of commerce — Money-lenders — Slaves*

Part of the country was still wild and dangerous; snakes wandered in the thick grass, and the kings of Babylonia and Assyria made it their royal sport to hunt in hand-to-hand conflict the lions that prowled in the woods, posed placidly for artists, but fled timidly at the nearer approach of men. Civilization is an occasional and temporary interruption of the jungle.

Most of the soil was tilled by tenants or by slaves; some of it by peasant proprietors.<sup>27</sup> In the earlier centuries the ground was broken up with stone hoes, as in neolithic tillage; a seal dating some 1400 B.C. is our earliest representation of the plough in Babylonia. Probably this ancient and honorable tool had already a long history behind it in the Land between the Rivers; and yet it was modern enough, for though it was drawn by oxen in the manner of our fathers, it had, attached to the plough, as in Sumeria, a tube through which the seed was sown in the manner of our children.<sup>28</sup> The waters of the rising rivers were not allowed to flood the land as in Egypt; on the contrary, every farm was protected from the inundation by ridges of earth, some of which can still be seen today. The overflow was guided into a complex network of canals, or stored into reservoirs, from which it was sluiced into the fields as needed, or raised over the ridges by *shadufs*—buckets lifted and lowered on a pivoted and revolving pole. Nebuchadrezzar distinguished his reign by building many canals, and gathering the surplus waters of the overflow into a reservoir, one hundred and forty miles in circumference, which nourished by its outlets vast areas of land.<sup>29</sup> Ruins of these canals can be seen in Mesopotamia today, and—as if further to bind the quick and the dead—the primitive *shaduf* is still in use in the valleys of the Euphrates and the Loire.<sup>30</sup>

So watered, the land produced a variety of cereals and pulses, great orchards of fruits and nuts, and above all, the date; from this beneficent concoction of sun and soil the Babylonians made bread, honey, cake and other delicacies; they mixed it with meal to make one of their most sustaining foods; and to encourage its reproduction they shook the flowers of the male palm over those of the female.<sup>31</sup> From Mesopotamia the grape and the olive were introduced into Greece and Rome and thence into western Europe; from nearby Persia came the peach; and from the shores of the Black Sea Lucullus brought the cherry-tree to Rome. Milk, so rare in the distant Orient, now became one of the staple foods of the Near East. Meat was rare and costly, but fish from the great streams found their way into the

poorest mouths. And in the evening, when the peasant might have been disturbed by thoughts on life and death, he quieted memory and anticipation with wine pressed from the date, or beer brewed from the corn.

Meanwhile others prised into the earth, struck oil, and mined copper, lead, iron, silver and gold. Strabo tells how what he calls "naphtha or liquid asphalt" was taken from the soil of Mesopotamia then as now, and how Alexander, hearing that this was a kind of water that burned, tested the report incredulously by covering a boy with the strange fluid and igniting him with a torch.<sup>30</sup> Tools, which had still been of stone in the days of Hammurabi, began, at the turn of the last millennium before Christ, to be made of bronze, then of iron; and the art of casting metal appeared. Textiles were woven of cotton and wool; stuffs were dyed and embroidered with such skill that these tissues became one of the most valued exports of Babylonia, praised to the skies by the writers of Greece and Rome.<sup>31</sup> As far back as we can go in Mesopotamian history we find the weaver's loom and the potter's wheel; these were almost the only machines. Buildings were mostly of adobe—clay mixed with straw; or bricks still soft and moist were placed one upon the other and allowed to dry into a solid wall cemented by the sun. It was observed that the bricks in the fireplace became harder and more durable than those that the sun had baked; the process of hardening them in kilns was then a natural development, and thenceforth there was no end to the making of bricks in Babylon. Trades multiplied and became diversified and skilled, and as early as Hammurabi industry was organized into guilds (called "tribes") of masters and apprentices.<sup>32</sup>

Local transport used wheeled carts drawn by patient asses.<sup>33</sup> The horse is first mentioned in Babylonian records about 2100 B.C., as "the ass from the East"; apparently it came from the table-lands of Central Asia, conquered Babylonia with the Kassites, and reached Egypt with the Hyksos.<sup>34</sup> With this new means of locomotion and carriage, trade expanded from local to foreign commerce; Babylon grew wealthy as the commercial hub of the Near East, and the nations of the ancient Mediterranean world were drawn into closer contact for good and ill. Nebuchadrezzar facilitated trade by improving the highways; "I have turned inaccessible tracks," he reminds the historian, "into serviceable roads."<sup>35</sup> Countless caravans brought to the bazaars and shops of Babylon the products of half the world. From India they came via Kabul, Herat and Ecbatana; from Egypt via Pelusium and Palestine; from Asia Minor through Tyre, Sidon and Sardis to Carchemish, and then down the Euphrates. As a result of all this trade Babylon became, under Nebuchadrezzar, a thriving and noisy market-place, from which the wealthy sought refuge in residential suburbs. Note the contemporary ring of a rich suburbanite's letter to King Cyrus of Persia (ca. 539 B.C.): "Our

estate seemed to me the finest in the world, for it was so near to Babylon that we enjoyed all the advantages of a great city, and yet could come back home and be rid of all its rush and worry."<sup>88</sup>

Government in Mesopotamia never succeeded in establishing such economic order as that which the Pharaohs achieved in Egypt. Commerce was harassed with a multiplicity of dangers and tolls, the merchant did not know which to fear the more—the robbers that might beset him on the way, or the towns and baronies that exacted heavy fees from him for the privilege of using their roads. It was safer, where possible, to take the great national highway, the Euphrates, which Nebuchadrezzar had made navigable from the Persian Gulf to Thapsacus.<sup>89</sup> His campaigns in Arabia and his subjugation of Tyre opened up to Babylonian commerce the Indian and Mediterranean Seas, but these opportunities were only partially explored. For on the open sea, as in the mountain passes and the desert wastes, perils beset the merchant at every hour. Vessels were large, but reefs were many and treacherous; navigation was not yet a science; and at any moment pirates, or the ambitious dwellers on the shore, might board the ships, appropriate the merchandise, and enslave or kill the crew.<sup>90</sup> The merchants reimbursed themselves for such losses by restricting their honesty to the necessities of each situation.

These difficult transactions were made easier by a well-developed system of finance. The Babylonians had no coinage, but even before Hammurabi they used—besides barley and corn—ingots of gold and silver as standards of value and mediums of exchange. The metal was unstamped, and was weighed at each transaction. The smallest unit of currency was the *shekel*—a half-ounce of silver worth from \$2.50 to \$5.00 of our contemporary currency; sixty such *shekels* made a *mina*, and sixty *minas* made a talent—from \$10,000 to \$20,000.<sup>91</sup> Loans were made in goods or currency, but at a high rate of interest, fixed by the state at 20% *per annum* for loans of money, and 33% for loans in kind; even these rates were exceeded by lenders who could hire clever scribes to circumvent the law.<sup>92</sup> There were no banks, but certain powerful families carried on from generation to generation the business of lending money; they dealt also in real estate, and financed industrial enterprises,<sup>93</sup> and persons who had funds on deposit with such men could pay their obligations by written drafts.<sup>94</sup> The priests also made loans, particularly to finance the sowing and reaping of the crops. The law occasionally took the side of the debtor: e.g., if a peasant mortgaged his farm, and through storm or drought or other "act of God" had no harvest from his toil, then no interest could be exacted from him in that year.<sup>95</sup> But for the most part the law was written with an eye to protecting property and preventing losses;

it was a principle of Babylonian law that no man had a right to borrow money unless he wished to be held completely responsible for its repayment; hence the creditor could seize the debtor's slave or son as hostage for an unpaid debt, and could hold him for not more than three years. A plague of usury was the price that Babylonian industry, like our own, paid for the fertilizing activity of a complex credit system.<sup>48</sup>

It was essentially a commercial civilization. Most of the documents that have come down from it are of a business character—sales, loans, contracts, partnerships, commissions, exchanges, bequests, agreements, promissory notes, and the like. We find in these tablets abundant evidence of wealth, and a certain materialistic spirit that managed, like some later civilizations, to reconcile piety with greed. We see in the literature many signs of a busy and prosperous life, but we find also, at every turn, reminders of the slavery that underlies all cultures. The most interesting contracts of sale from the age of Nebuchadrezzar are those that have to do with slaves.<sup>49</sup> They were recruited from captives taken in battle, from slave-raids carried out upon foreign states by marauding Bedouins, and from the reproductive enthusiasm of the slaves themselves. Their value ranged from \$20 to \$65 for a woman, and from \$50 to \$100 for a man.<sup>50</sup> Most of the physical work in the towns was done by them, including nearly all of the personal service. Female slaves were completely at the mercy of their purchaser, and were expected to provide him with bed as well as board; it was understood that he would breed through them a copious supply of children, and those slaves who were not so treated felt themselves neglected and dishonored.<sup>51</sup> The slave and all his belongings were his master's property: he might be sold or pledged for debt, he might be put to death if his master thought him less lucrative alive than dead; if he ran away no one could legally harbor him, and a reward was fixed for his capture. Like the free peasant he was subject to conscription for both the army and the *corvée*—i.e., for forced labor in such public works as cutting roads and digging canals. On the other hand the slave's master paid his doctor's fees, and kept him moderately alive through illness, slack employment and old age. He might marry a free woman, and his children by her would be free; half his property, in such a case, went on his death to his family. He might be set up in business by his master, and retain part of the profits—with which he might then buy his freedom; or his master might liberate him for exceptional or long and faithful service. But only a few slaves achieved such freedom. The rest consoled themselves with a high birth-rate, until they became more numerous than the free. A great slave-class moved like a swelling subterranean river underneath the Babylonian state.

## III. THE LAW

*The Code of Hammurabi—The powers of the king—Trial by ordeal — “Lex Talionis” — Forms of punishment — Codes of wages and prices—State restoration of stolen goods*

Such a society, of course, never dreamed of democracy; its economic character necessitated a monarchy supported by commercial wealth or feudal privilege, and protected by the judicious distribution of legal violence. A landed aristocracy, gradually displaced by a commercial plutocracy, helped to maintain social control, and served as intermediary between people and king. The latter passed his throne down to any son of his choosing, with the result that every son considered himself heir apparent, formed a clique of supporters, and, as like as not, raised a war of succession if his hopes were unfulfilled.<sup>47</sup> Within the limits of this arbitrary rule the government was carried on by central and local lords or administrators appointed by the king. These were advised and checked by provincial or municipal assemblies of elders or notables, who managed to maintain, even under Assyrian domination, a proud measure of local self-government.<sup>48</sup>

Every administrator, and usually the king himself, acknowledged the guidance and authority of that great body of law which had been given form under Hammurabi, and had maintained its substance, despite every change of circumstance and detail, through fifteen centuries. The legal development was from supernatural to secular sanctions, from severity to lenience, and from physical to financial penalties. In the earlier days an appeal to the gods was taken through trial by ordeal. A man accused of sorcery, or a woman charged with adultery, was invited to leap into the Euphrates; and the gods were on the side of the best swimmers. If the woman emerged alive, she was innocent; if the “sorcerer” was drowned, his accuser received his property; if he was not, he received the property of his accuser.<sup>49</sup> The first judges were priests, and to the end of Babylonian history the courts were for the most part located in the temples;<sup>50</sup> but already in the days of Hammurabi secular courts responsible only to the government were replacing the judgment-seats presided over by the clergy.

Penology began with the *lex talionis*, or law of equivalent retaliation. If a man knocked out an eye or a tooth, or broke a limb, of a patrician,

precisely the same was to be done to him.<sup>51</sup> If a house collapsed and killed the purchaser, the architect or builder must die; if the accident killed the buyer's son, the son of the architect or builder must die; if a man struck a girl and killed her not he but his daughter must suffer the penalty of death.<sup>52</sup> Gradually these punishments in kind were replaced by awards of damages; a payment of money was permitted as an alternative to the physical retaliation,<sup>53</sup> and later the fine became the sole punishment. So the eye of a commoner might be knocked out for sixty *shekels* of silver, and the eye of a slave might be knocked out for thirty.<sup>54</sup> For the penalty varied not merely with the gravity of the offense, but with the rank of the offender and the victim. A member of the aristocracy was subject to severer penalties for the same crime than a man of the people, but an offense against such an aristocrat was a costly extravagance. A plebeian striking a plebeian was fined ten *shekels*, or fifty dollars; to strike a person of title or property cost six times more.<sup>55</sup> From such dissuasions the law passed to barbarous punishments by amputation or death. A man who struck his father had his hands cut off;<sup>56</sup> a physician whose patient died, or lost an eye, as the result of an operation, had his fingers cut off;<sup>57</sup> a nurse who knowingly substituted one child for another had to sacrifice her breasts.<sup>58</sup> Death was decreed for a variety of crimes: rape, kidnaping, brigandage, burglary, incest, procurement of a husband's death by his wife in order to marry another man, the opening or entering of a wine-shop by a priestess, the harboring of a fugitive slave, cowardice in the face of the enemy, malfeasance in office, careless or uneconomical housewifery,<sup>59</sup> or malpractice in the selling of beer.<sup>60</sup> In such rough ways, through thousands of years, those traditions and habits of order and self-restraint were established which became part of the unconscious basis of civilization.

Within certain limits the state regulated prices, wages and fees. What the surgeon might charge was established by law; and wages were fixed by the Code of Hammurabi for builders, brickmakers, tailors, stonemasons, carpenters, boatmen, herdsman, and laborers.<sup>61</sup> The law of inheritance made the man's children, rather than his wife, his natural and direct heirs; the widow received her dowry and her wedding-gift, and remained head of the household as long as she lived. There was no right of primogeniture; the sons inherited equally, and in this way the largest estates were soon redivided, and the concentration of wealth was in some measure checked.<sup>62</sup> Private property in land and goods was taken for granted by the Code.

We find no evidence of lawyers in Babylonia, except for priests who might serve as notaries, and the scribe who would write for pay anything from a will to a madrigal. The plaintiff preferred his own plea, without the luxury of terminology. Litigation was discouraged; the very first law of the Code reads, with almost illegal simplicity: "If a man bring an accusation against a man, and charge him with a (capital) crime, but cannot prove it, the accuser shall be put to death."<sup>88</sup> There are signs of bribery, and of tampering with witnesses.<sup>89</sup> A court of appeals, staffed by "the King's Judges," sat at Babylon, and a final appeal might be carried to the king himself. There was nothing in the Code about the rights of the individual against the state; that was to be a European innovation. But articles 22-24 provided, if not political, at least economic, protection. "If a man practise brigandage and be captured, that man shall be put to death. If the brigand be not captured, the man who has been robbed shall, in the presence of the god, make an itemized statement of his loss, and the city and governor within whose province and jurisdiction the robbery was committed shall compensate him for whatever was lost. If it be a life (that was lost), the city and governor shall pay one *mima* (\$300) to the heirs." What modern city is so well governed that it would dare to offer such reimbursements to the victims of its negligence? Has the law progressed since Hammurabi, or only increased and multiplied?

#### IV. THE GODS OF BABYLON

*Religion and the state—The functions and powers of the clergy—The lesser gods—Marduk—Ishtar—The Babylonian stories of the Creation and the Flood—The love of Ishtar and Tammuz—The descent of Ishtar into Hell—The death and resurrection of Tammuz—Ritual and prayer—Penitential psalms—Sin—Magic—Superstition*

The power of the king was limited not only by the law and the aristocracy, but by the clergy. Technically the king was merely the agent of the city god. Taxation was in the name of the god, and found its way directly or deviously into the temple treasuries. The king was not really king in the eyes of the people until he was invested with royal authority by the priests, "took the hands of Bel," and conducted the

image of Marduk in solemn procession through the streets. In these ceremonies the monarch was dressed as a priest, symbolizing the union of church and state, and perhaps the priestly origin of the kingship. All the glamor of the supernatural hedged about the throne, and made rebellion a colossal impiety which risked not only the neck but the soul. Even the mighty Hammurabi received his laws from the god. From the *patesis* or priest-governors of Sumeria to the religious coronation of Nebuchadnezzar, Babylonia remained in effect a theocratic state, always "under the thumb of the priests."<sup>77</sup>

The wealth of the temples grew from generation to generation, as the uneasy rich shared their dividends with the gods. The kings, feeling an especial need of divine forgiveness, built the temples, equipped them with furniture, food and slaves, deeded to them great areas of land, and assigned to them an annual income from the state. When the army won a battle, the first share of the captives and the spoils went to the temples; when any special good fortune befell the king, extraordinary gifts were dedicated to the gods. Certain lands were required to pay to the temples a yearly tribute of dates, corn, or fruit; if they failed, the temples could foreclose on them; and in this way the lands usually came into possession by the priests. Poor as well as rich turned over to the temples as much as they thought profitable of their earthly gains. Gold, silver, copper, *lapis lazuli*, gems and precious woods accumulated in the sacred treasury.

As the priests could not directly use or consume this wealth, they turned it into productive or investment capital, and became the greatest agriculturists, manufacturers and financiers of the nation. Not only did they hold vast tracts of land; they owned a great number of slaves, or controlled hundreds of laborers, who were hired out to other employers, or worked for the temples in their divers trades from the playing of music to the brewing of beer.<sup>78</sup> The priests were also the greatest merchants and financiers of Babylonia; they sold the varied products of the temple shops, and handled a large proportion of the country's trade; they had a reputation for wise investment, and many persons entrusted their savings to them, confident of a modest but reliable return. They made loans on more lenient terms than the private money-lenders; sometimes they lent to the sick or the poor without interest, merely asking a return of the principal when Marduk should smile upon the borrower again.<sup>79</sup> Finally,



they performed many legal functions: they served as notaries, attesting and signing contracts, and making wills; they heard and decided suits and trials, kept official records, and recorded commercial transactions.

Occasionally the king commandeered some of the temple accumulations to meet an expensive emergency. But this was rare and dangerous, for the priests had laid terrible curses upon all who should touch, unpermitted, the smallest jot of ecclesiastical property. Besides, their influence with the people was ultimately greater than that of the king, and they might in most cases depose him if they set their combined wits and powers to this end. They had also the advantage of permanence; the king died, but the god lived on; the council of priests, free from the fortunes of elections, illnesses, assassinations and wars, had a corporate perpetuity that made possible long-term and patient policies, such as characterize great religious organizations to this day. The supremacy of the priests under these conditions was inevitable. It was fated that the merchants should make Babylon, and that the priests should enjoy it.

Who were the gods that formed the invisible constabulary of the state? They were numerous, for the imagination of the people was limitless, and there was hardly any end to the needs that deities might serve. An official census of the gods, undertaken in the ninth century before Christ, counted them as some 65,000.<sup>66</sup> Every town had its tutelary divinity; and as, in our own time and faith, localities and villages, after making formal acknowledgment of the Supreme Being, worship specific minor gods with a special devotion, so Larsa lavished its temples on Shamash, Uruk on Ishtar, Ur on Nannar—for the Sumerian pantheon had survived the Sumerian state. The gods were not aloof from men; most of them lived on earth in the temples, ate with a hearty appetite, and through nocturnal visits to pious women gave unexpected children to the busy citizens of Babylon.<sup>67</sup>

Oldest of all were the astronomic gods: Anu, the immovable firmament, Shamash, the sun, Nannar, the moon, and Bel or Baal, the earth into whose bosom all Babylonians returned after death.<sup>68</sup> Every family had household gods, to whom prayers were said and libations poured each morning and night; every individual had a protective divinity (or, as we should say, a guardian angel) to keep him from harm and joy; and genii of fertility hovered beneficently over the fields. It was probably out of this multitude of spirits that the Jews moulded their cherubim.

We do not find among the Babylonians such signs of monotheism as appear in Ikhnaton and the Second Isaiah. Two forces, however, brought them near to it: the enlargement of the state by conquest and growth brought local deities under the supremacy of a single god; and several of the cities patriotically conferred omnipotence upon their favored divinities. "Trust in Nebo," says Nebo, "trust in no other god";<sup>7</sup> this is not unlike the first of the commandments given to the Jews. Gradually the number of the gods was lessened by interpreting the minor ones as forms or attributes of the major deities. In these ways the god of Babylon, Marduk, originally a sun god, became sovereign of all Babylonian divinities.<sup>8</sup> Hence his title, Bel-Marduk—that is, Marduk *the* god. To him and to Ishtar the Babylonians sent up the most eloquent of their prayers.

Ishtar (Astarte to the Greeks, Ashtoreth to the Jews) interests us not only as analogue of the Egyptian Isis and prototype of the Grecian Aphrodite and the Roman Venus, but as the formal beneficiary of one of the strangest of Babylonian customs. She was Demeter as well as Aphrodite—no mere goddess of physical beauty and love, but the gracious divinity of bounteous motherhood, the secret inspiration of the growing soil, and the creative principle everywhere. It is impossible to find much harmony, from a modern point of view, in the attributes and functions of Ishtar: she was the goddess of war as well as of love, of prostitutes as well as of mothers; she called herself "a compassionate courtesan";<sup>9</sup> she was represented sometimes as a bearded bisexual deity, sometimes as a nude female offering her breasts to suck;<sup>10</sup> and though her worshipers repeatedly addressed her as "The Virgin," "The Holy Virgin," and "The Virgin Mother," this merely meant that her amours were free from all taint of wedlock. Gilgamesh rejected her advances on the ground that she could not be trusted; had she not once loved, seduced, and then slain, a lion?<sup>11</sup> It is clear that we must put our own moral code to one side if we are to understand her. Note with what fervor the Babylonians could lift up to her throne litanies of laudation only less splendid than those which a tender piety once raised to the Mother of God:

I beseech thee, Lady of Ladies, Goddess of Goddesses, Ishtar, Queen of all cities, leader of all men.

Thou art the light of the world, thou art the light of heaven, mighty daughter of Sin (the moon-god). . . .

Supreme is thy might, O Lady, exalted art thou above all gods.

Thou renderest judgment, and thy decision is righteous.  
Unto thee are subject the laws of the earth and the laws of heaven,  
the laws of the temples and the shrines, the laws of the private  
apartment and the secret chamber.  
Where is the place where thy name is not, and where is the spot  
where thy commandments are not known?  
At thy name the earth and the heavens shake, and the gods they  
tremble. . . .  
Thou lookest upon the oppressed, and to the down-trodden thou  
bringest justice every day.  
How long, Queen of Heaven and Earth, how long,  
How long, Shepherdess of pale-faced men, wilt thou tarry?  
How long, O Queen whose feet are not weary, and whose knees  
make haste?  
How long, Lady of Hosts, Lady of Battles?  
Glorious one whom all the spirits of heaven fear, who subduest all  
angry gods; mighty above all rulers; who holdest the reins of kings.  
Opener of the womb of all women, great is thy light.  
Shining light of heaven, light of the world, enlightener of all the  
places where men dwell, who gatherest together the hosts of the  
nations.  
Goddess of men, Divinity of women, thy counsel passeth under-  
standing.  
Where thou glancest, the dead come to life, and the sick rise and  
walk; the mind of the diseased is healed when it looks upon thy  
face.  
How long, O Lady, shall mine enemy triumph over me?  
Command, and at thy command the angry god will turn back.  
Ishtar is great! Ishtar is Queen! My Lady is exalted, my Lady is  
Queen, Innini, the mighty daughter of Sin.  
There is none like unto her."<sup>70</sup>

With these gods as *dramatis personæ* the Babylonians constructed myths which have in large measure come down to us, through the Jews, as part of our own religious lore. There was first of all the myth of the creation. In the beginning was Chaos. "In the time when nothing which was called heaven existed above, and when nothing below had yet received the name of earth, Apsu, the Ocean, who first was their father, and Tiamat, Chaos, who gave birth to them all, mingled their waters in one." Things slowly began to grow and take form; but suddenly the monster-

goddess Tiamat set out to destroy all the other gods, and to make herself—Chaos—supreme. A mighty revolution ensued in which all order was destroyed. Then another god, Marduk, slew Tiamat with her own medicine by casting a hurricane of wind into her mouth as she opened it to swallow him; then he thrust his lance into Tiamat's wind-swollen paunch, and the goddess of Chaos blew up. Marduk, "recovering his calm," says the legend, split the dead Tiamat into two longitudinal halves, as one does a fish for drying; "then he hung up one of the halves on high, which became the heavens; the other half he spread out under his feet to form the earth."<sup>77</sup> This is as much as we yet know about creation. Perhaps the ancient poet meant to suggest that the only creation of which we can know anything is the replacement of chaos with order, for in the end this is the essence of art and civilization. We should remember, however, that the defeat of Chaos is only a myth.<sup>78</sup>

Having moved heaven and earth into place, Marduk undertook to knead earth with his blood and thereby make men for the service of the gods. Mesopotamian legends differed on the precise way in which this was done; they agreed in general that man was fashioned by the deity from a lump of clay. Usually they represented him as living at first not in a paradise but in bestial simplicity and ignorance, until a strange monster called Oannes, half fish and half philosopher, taught him the arts and sciences, the rules for founding cities, and the principles of law; after which Oannes plunged into the sea, and wrote a book on the history of civilization.<sup>79</sup> Presently, however, the gods became dissatisfied with the men whom they had created, and sent a great flood to destroy them and all their works. The god of wisdom, Ea, took pity on mankind, and resolved to save one man at least—Shamash-napishtim—and his wife. The flood raged; men "encumbered the sea like fishes' spawn." Then suddenly the gods wept and gnashed their teeth at their own folly, asking themselves, "Who will make the accustomed offerings now?" But Shamash-napishtim had built an ark, had survived the flood, had perched on the mountain of Nisir, and had sent out a reconnoitering dove; now he decided to sacrifice to the gods, who accepted his gifts with surprise and gratitude. "The gods snuffed up the odor, the gods snuffed up the excellent odor, the gods gathered like flies above the offering."<sup>80</sup>

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\* The Babylonian story of creation consists of seven tablets (one for each day of creation) found in the ruins of Ashurbanipal's library at Kuyunjik (Nineveh) in 1854; they are a copy of a legend that came down to Babylonia and Assyria from Sumeria.<sup>78</sup>

Lovelier than this vague memory of some catastrophic inundation is the vegetation myth of Ishtar and Tammuz. In the Sumerian form of the tale Tammuz is Ishtar's young brother; in the Babylonian form he is sometimes her lover, sometimes her son; both forms seem to have entered into the myths of Venus and Adonis, Demeter and Persephone, and a hundred scattered legends of death and resurrection. Tammuz, son of the great god Ea, is a shepherd pasturing his flock under the great tree Erida (which covers the whole earth with its shade) when Ishtar, always insatiable, falls in love with him, and chooses him to be the spouse of her youth. But Tammuz, like Adonis, is gored to death by a wild boar, and descends, like all the dead, into that dark subterranean Hades which the Babylonians called Aralu, and over which they set as ruler Ishtar's jealous sister, Ereshkigal. Ishtar, mourning inconsolably, resolves to go down to Aralu and restore Tammuz to life by bathing his wounds in the waters of a healing spring. Soon she appears at the gates of Hades in all her imperious beauty, and demands entrance. The tablets tell the story vigorously:

When Ereshkigal heard this,  
As when one hews down a tamarisk (she trembled?).  
As when one cuts a reed (she shook?).  
"What has moved her heart, what has (stirred) her liver?  
Ho, there, (does) this one (wish to dwell) with me?  
To eat clay as food, to drink (dust?) as wine?  
I weep for the men who have left their wives;  
I weep for the wives torn from the embrace of their husbands;  
For the little ones (cut off) before their time.  
Go, gate-keeper, open thy gate for her,  
Deal with her according to the ancient decree."

The ancient decree is that none but the nude shall enter Aralu. Therefore at each of the successive gates through which Ishtar must pass, the keeper divests her of some garment or ornament: first her crown, then her ear-rings, then her necklacc, then the ornaments from her bosom, then her many-jeweled girdle, then the spangles from her hands and feet, and lastly her loin-cloth; and Ishtar, protesting gracefully, yields.

Now when Ishtar had gone down into the land of no return,  
Ereshkigal saw her and was angered at her presence.

Ishtar without reflection threw herself at her.  
Ereshkigal opened her mouth and spoke  
To Namtar, her messenger. . . .  
"Go, Namtar, (imprison her<sup>2</sup>) in my palace.  
Send against her sixty diseases,  
Eye disease against her eyes,  
Disease of the side against her side,  
Foot-disease against her foot,  
Heart-disease against her heart,  
Head-disease against her head,  
Against her whole being."

While Ishtar is detained in Hades by these sisterly attentions, the earth, missing the inspiration of her presence, forgets incredibly all the arts and ways of love: plant no longer fertilizes plant, vegetation languishes, animals experience no heat, men cease to yearn.

After the lady Ishtar had gone down into the land of no return,  
The bull did not mount the cow, the ass approached not the she-ass;  
To the maid in the street no man drew near;  
The man slept in his apartment,  
The maid slept by herself.

Population begins to diminish, and the gods note with alarm a sharp decline in the number of offerings from the earth. In panic they command Ereshkigal to release Ishtar. It is done, but Ishtar refuses to return to the surface of the earth unless she is allowed to take Tammuz with her. She wins her point, passes triumphantly through the seven gates, receives her loin-cloth, her spangles, her girdle, her pectorals, her necklace, her ear-rings and her crown. As she appears plants grow and bloom again, the land swells with food, and every animal resumes the business of reproducing his kind.<sup>21</sup> Love, stronger than death, is restored to its rightful place as master of gods and men. To the modern scholar it is only an admirable legend, symbolizing delightfully the yearly death and rebirth of the soil, and that omnipotence of Venus which Lucretius was to celebrate in his own strong verse; to the Babylonians it was sacred history, faithfully believed and annually commemorated in a day of mourning and wailing for the dead Tammuz, followed by riotous rejoicing over his resurrection.<sup>22</sup>

Nevertheless the Babylonian derived no satisfaction from the idea of personal immortality. His religion was terrestrially practical; when he prayed he asked not for celestial rewards but for earthly goods;<sup>88</sup> he could not trust his gods beyond the grave. It is true that one text speaks of Marduk as he "who gives back life to the dead,"<sup>89</sup> and the story of the flood represents its two survivors as living forever. But for the most part the Babylonian conception of another life was like that of the Greeks: dead men—saints and villains, geniuses and idiots, alike—went to a dark and shadowy realm within the bowels of the earth, and none of them saw the light again. There was a heaven, but only for the gods; the Aralu to which all men descended was a place frequently of punishment, never of joy; there the dead lay bound hand and foot forever, shivering with cold, and subject to hunger and thirst unless their children placed food periodically in their graves.<sup>90</sup> Those who had been especially wicked on earth were subjected to horrible tortures; leprosy consumed them, or some other of the diseases which Nergal and Allat, male and female lords of Aralu, had arranged for their rectification.

Most bodies were buried in vaults; a few were cremated, and their remains were preserved in urns.<sup>91</sup> The dead body was not embalmed, but professional mourners washed and perfumed it, clad it presentably, painted its cheeks, darkened its eyelids, put rings upon its fingers, and provided it with a change of linen. If the corpse was that of a woman it was equipped with scent-bottles, combs, cosmetic pencils, and eye-paint to preserve its fragrance and complexion in the nether world.<sup>92</sup> If not properly buried the dead would torment the living; if not buried at all, the soul would prowl about sewers and gutters for food, and might afflict an entire city with pestilence.<sup>93</sup> It was a medley of ideas not as consistent as Euclid, but sufficing to prod the simple Babylonian to keep his gods and priests well fed.

The usual offering was food and drink, for these had the advantage that if they were not entirely consumed by the gods the surplus need not go to waste. A frequent sacrifice on Babylonian altars was the lamb; and an old Babylonian incantation strangely anticipates the symbolism of Judaism and Christianity: "The lamb as a substitute for a man, the lamb he gives for his life."<sup>94</sup> Sacrifice was a complex ritual, requiring the expert services of a priest; every act and word of the ceremony was settled by sacred tradition, and any amateur deviation from these forms might mean that the gods would eat without listening. In general, to the Babylonian, religion meant correct ritual rather than the good life. To do one's duty to the gods one had to offer proper sacrifice to the temples, and recite the appropriate prayers;<sup>95</sup> for the rest he might cut out the eyes of his fallen enemy, cut off the hands and feet of captives, and roast their remainders alive in a furnace,<sup>96</sup> without much offense to heaven. To participate in—or reverently to attend—long and solemn

processions like those in which the priests carried from sanctuary to sanctuary the image of Marduk, and performed the sacred drama of his death and resurrection; to anoint the idols with sweet-scented oils,\* to burn incense before them, clothe them with rich vestments, or adorn them with jewelry; to offer up the virginity of their daughters in the great festival of Ishtar; to put food and drink before the gods, and to be generous to the priests—these were the essential works of the devout Babylonian soul.<sup>53</sup>

Perhaps we misjudge him, as doubtless the future will misjudge us from the fragments that accident will rescue from our decay. Some of the finest literary relics of the Babylonians are prayers that breathe a profound and sincere piety. Hear the proud Nebuchadrezzar humbly addressing Marduk:

Without thee, Lord, what could there be  
For the king thou lovest, and dost call his name?  
Thou shalt bless his title as thou wilt,  
And unto him vouchsafe a path direct.  
I, the prince obeying thee,  
Am what thy hands have made.  
'Tis thou who art my creator,  
Entrusting me with the rule of hosts of men.  
According to thy mercy, Lord, . . .  
Turn into loving-kindness thy dread power,  
And make to spring up in my heart  
A reverence for thy divinity.  
Give as thou thinkest best.<sup>54</sup>

The surviving literature abounds in hymns full of that passionate self-abasement with which the Semite tries to control and conceal his pride. Many of them take the character of "penitential psalms," and prepare us for the magnificent feeling and imagery of "David"; who knows but they served as models for that many-headed Muse?

I, thy servant, full of sighs cry unto thee.  
Thou acceptest the fervent prayer of him who is burdened with sin.  
Thou lookest upon a man, and that man lives. . . .  
Look with true favor upon me, and accept my supplication. . . .

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\* Therefore Tammuz was called "The Anointed."<sup>55</sup>



And then, as if uncertain of the sex of the god—

How long, my god,  
How long, my goddess, until thy face be turned to me?  
How long, known and unknown god, until the anger of thy heart  
shall be appeased?  
How long, known and unknown goddess, until thy unfriendly heart  
be appeased?  
Mankind is perverted, and has no judgment;  
Of all men who are alive, who knows anything?  
They do not know whether they do good or evil.  
O Lord, do not cast aside thy servant;  
He is cast into the mire; take his hand!  
The sin which I have sinned, turn to mercy!  
The iniquity which I have committed, let the wind carry away!  
*My many transgressions tear off like a garment!*  
My god, my sins are seven times seven; forgive my sins!  
My goddess, my sins are seven times seven; forgive my sins! . . .  
Forgive my sins, and I will humble myself before thee.  
May thy heart, as the heart of a mother who hath borne children,  
be glad;  
As a mother who hath borne children, as a father who hath begotten,  
may it be glad!<sup>66</sup>

Such psalms and hymns were sung sometimes by the priests, sometimes by the congregation, sometimes by both in strophe and antistrophe. Perhaps the strangest circumstance about them is that—like all the religious literature of Babylon—they were written in the ancient Sumerian language, which served the Babylonian and Assyrian churches precisely as Latin serves the Roman Catholic Church today. And just as a Catholic hymnal may juxtapose the Latin text to a vernacular translation, so some of the hymns that have come down to us from Mesopotamia have a Babylonian or Assyrian translation written between the lines of the “classic” Sumerian original, in the fashion of a contemporary schoolboy’s “interlinear.” And as the form of these hymns and rituals led to the Psalms of the Jews and the liturgy of the Roman Church, so their content presaged the pessimistic and sin-struck plaints of the Jews, the early Christians, and the modern Puritans. The sense of sin, though it did not interfere victoriously in Babylonian life, filled the Babylonian chants, and rang a note that survives in all Semitic liturgies and their anti-Semitic

derivatives. "Lord," cries one hymn, "my sins are many, great are my misdeeds! . . . I sink under affliction, I can no longer raise my head; I turn to my merciful God to call upon him, and I groan! . . . Lord, reject not thy servant!"<sup>700</sup>

These groanings were rendered more sincere by the Babylonian conception of sin. Sin was no mere theoretical state of the soul; like sickness it was the possession of the body by a demon that might destroy it. Prayer was in the nature of an incantation against a demon that had come down upon the individual out of the ocean of magic forces in which the ancient Orient lived and moved. Everywhere, in the Babylonian view, these hostile demons lurked: they hid in strange crannies, slipped through doors or even through bolts and sockets, and pounced upon their victims in the form of illness or madness whenever some sin had withdrawn for a moment the beneficent guardianship of the gods. Giants, dwarfs, cripples, above all, women, had sometimes the power, even with a glance of the "evil eye," to infuse such a destructive spirit into the bodies of those toward whom they were ill-disposed. Partial protection against these demons was provided by the use of magic amulets, talismans and kindred charms; images of the gods, carried on the body, would usually suffice to frighten the devils away. Little stones strung on a thread or a chain and hung about the neck were especially effective, but care had to be taken that the stones were such as tradition associated with good luck, and the thread had to be of black, white or red according to the purpose in view. Thread spun from virgin kids was particularly powerful.<sup>701</sup> But in addition to such means it was wise also to exorcise the demon by fervent incantation and magic ritual—for example, by sprinkling the body with water taken from the sacred streams—the Tigris or the Euphrates. Or an image of the demon could be made, placed on a boat, and sent over the water with a proper formula; if the boat could be made to capsize, so much the better. The demon might be persuaded, by the appropriate incantation, to leave its human victim and enter an animal—a bird, a pig, most frequently a lamb.<sup>702</sup>

Magic formulas for the elimination of demons, the avoidance of evil and the prevision of the future constitute the largest category in the Babylonian writings found in the library of Ashurbanipal. Some of the tablets are manuals of astrology; others are lists of omens celestial and terrestrial, with expert advice for reading them; others are treatises on the interpretation of dreams, rivaling in their ingenious incredibility the most advanced products of modern psychology; still others offer instruction in divining the future by examining the entrails of animals, or by observing the form and position of a

drop of oil let fall into a jar of water."<sup>99</sup> Hepatoscopy—observation of the liver of animals—was a favorite method of divination among the Babylonian priests, and passed from them into the classical world; for the liver was believed to be the seat of the mind in both animals and men. No king would undertake a campaign or advance to a battle, no Babylonian would risk a crucial decision or begin an enterprise of great moment, without employing a priest or a soothsayer to read the omens for him in one or another of these recondite ways.

Never was a civilization richer in superstitions. Every turn of chance from the anomalies of birth to the varieties of death received a popular, sometimes an official and sacerdotal, interpretation in magical or supernatural terms. Every movement of the rivers, every aspect of the stars, every dream, every unusual performance of man or beast, revealed the future to the properly instructed Babylonian. The fate of a king could be forecast by observing the movements of a dog,<sup>100</sup> just as we foretell the length of the winter by spying upon the groundhog. The superstitions of Babylonia seem ridiculous to us, because they differ superficially from our own. There is hardly an absurdity of the past that cannot be found flourishing somewhere in the present. Underneath all civilization, ancient or modern, moved and still moves a sea of magic, superstition and sorcery. Perhaps they will remain when the works of our reason have passed away.

#### V. THE MORALS OF BABYLON

*Religion divorced from morals—Sacred prostitution—Free love—  
Marriage — Adultery — Divorce — The position of woman —  
The relaxation of morals*

This religion, with all its failings, probably helped to prod the common Babylonian into some measure of decency and civic docility, else we should be hard put to explain the generosity of the kings to the priests. Apparently, however, it had no influence upon the morals of the upper classes in the later centuries, for (in the eyes and words of her prejudiced enemies) the "whore of Babylon" was a "sink of iniquity," and a scandalous example of luxurious laxity to all the ancient world. Even Alexander, who was not above dying of drinking, was shocked by the morals of Babylon.<sup>101</sup>

The most striking feature of Babylonian life, to an alien observer, was the custom known to us chiefly from a famous page in Herodotus:

Every native woman is obliged, once in her life, to sit in the temple of Venus, and have intercourse with some stranger. And many disdaining to mix with the rest, being proud on account of their wealth, come in covered carriages, and take up their station at the temple with a numerous train of servants attending them. But the far greater part do thus: many sit down in the temple of Venus, wearing a crown of cord round their heads; some are continually coming in, and others are going out. Passages marked out in a straight line lead in every direction through the women, along which strangers pass and make their choice. When a woman has once seated herself she must not return home till some stranger has thrown a piece of silver into her lap, and lain with her outside the temple. He who throws the silver must say thus: "I beseech the goddess Mylitta to favor thee"; for the Assyrians call Venus Mylitta.\* The silver may be ever so small, for she will not reject it, inasmuch as it is not lawful for her to do so, for such silver is accounted sacred. The woman follows the first man that throws, and refuses no one. But when she has had intercourse and has absolved herself from her obligation to the goddess, she returns home; and after that time, however great a sum you may give her you will not gain possession of her. Those that are endowed with beauty and symmetry of shape are soon set free; but the deformed are detained a long time, from inability to satisfy the law, for some wait for a space of three or four years.<sup>302</sup>

What was the origin of this strange rite? Was it a relic of ancient sexual communism, a concession, by the future bridegroom, of the *jus prime noctis*, or right of the first night, to the community as represented by any casual and anonymous citizen?<sup>303</sup> Was it due to the bridegroom's fear of harm from the violation of the tabu against shedding blood?<sup>304</sup> Was it a physical preparation for marriage, such as is still practised among some Australian tribes?<sup>305</sup> Or was it simply a sacrifice to the goddess—an offering of first fruits?<sup>306</sup> We do not know.

Such women, of course, were not prostitutes. But various classes of prostitutes lived within the temple precincts, plied their trade there, and amassed, some of them, great fortunes. Such temple prostitutes were common in western Asia: we find them in Israel,<sup>307</sup> Phrygia, Phoenicia, Syria, etc.; in Lydia and Cyprus the girls earned their marriage dowries

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\* "Assyrians" meant for the Greeks both Assyrians and Babylonians. "Mylitta" was one of the forms of Ishtar.

in this way.<sup>108</sup> "Sacred prostitution" continued in Babylonia until abolished by Constantine (ca. 325 A.D.).<sup>109</sup> Alongside it, in the wine-shops kept by women, secular prostitution flourished.<sup>110</sup>

In general the Babylonians were allowed considerable premarital experience. It was considered permissible for men and women to form unlicensed unions, "trial marriages," terminable at the will of either party; but the woman in such cases was obliged to wear an olive—in stone or *terra cotta*—as a sign that she was a concubine.<sup>111</sup> Some tablets indicate that the Babylonians wrote poems, and sang songs, of love; but all that remains of these is an occasional first line, like "My love is a light," or "My heart is full of merriment and song."<sup>112</sup> One letter, dating from 2100 B.C., is in the tone of Napoleon's early messages to Josephine: "To Bibiya: . . . May Shamash and Marduk give thee health forever. . . . I have sent (to ask) after thy health; let me know how thou art. I have arrived in Babylon, and see thee not; I am very sad."<sup>113</sup>

Legal marriage was arranged by the parents, and was sanctioned by an exchange of gifts obviously descended from marriage by purchase. The suitor presented to the father of the bride a substantial present, but the father was expected to give her a dowry greater in value than the gift,<sup>114</sup> so that it was difficult to say who was purchased, the woman or the man. Sometimes, however, the arrangement was unabashed purchase; Shamashnazir, for example, received ten *shekels* (\$50) as the price of his daughter.<sup>115</sup> If we are to believe the Father of History,

those who had marriageable daughters used to bring them once a year to a place where a great number of men gathered round them. A public crier made them stand up and sold them all, one after another. He began with the most beautiful, and having got a large sum for her he put up the second fairest. But he only sold them on condition that the buyers married them. . . . This very wise custom no longer exists.<sup>116</sup>

Despite these strange practices, Babylonian marriage seems to have been as monogamous and faithful as marriage in Christendom is today. Premarital freedom was followed by the rigid enforcement of marital fidelity. The adulterous wife and her paramour, according to the Code, were drowned, unless the husband, in his mercy, preferred to let his wife off by turning her almost naked into the streets.<sup>117</sup> Hammurabi out-Cæsared Cæsar: "If the finger have been pointed at the wife of a man be-

cause of another man, and she have not been taken in lying with another man, for her husband's sake she shall throw herself into the river"<sup>131</sup>—perhaps the law was intended as a discouragement to gossip. The man could divorce his wife simply by restoring her dowry to her and saying, "Thou art not my wife"; but if she said to him, "Thou art not my husband," she was to be drowned.<sup>132</sup> Childlessness, adultery, incompatibility, or careless management of the household might satisfy the law as ground for granting the man a divorce;<sup>133</sup> indeed "if she have not been a careful mistress, have gadded about, have neglected her house, and have belittled her children, they shall throw that woman into the water."<sup>134</sup> As against this incredible severity of the Code, we find that in practice the woman, though she might not divorce her husband, was free to leave him, if she could show cruelty on his part and fidelity on her own; in such cases she could return to her parents, and take her marriage portion with her, along with what other property she might have acquired.<sup>135</sup> (The women of England did not enjoy these rights till the end of the nineteenth century.) If a woman's husband was kept from her, through business or war, for any length of time, and had left no means for her maintenance, she might cohabit with another man without legal prejudice to her reunion with her husband on the latter's return.<sup>136</sup>

In general the position of woman in Babylonia was lower than in Egypt or Rome, and yet not worse than in classic Greece or medieval Europe. To carry out her many functions—begetting and rearing children, fetching water from the river or the public well, grinding corn, cooking, spinning, weaving, cleaning—she had to be free to go about in public very much like the man.<sup>137</sup> She could own property, enjoy its income, sell and buy, inherit and bequeath.<sup>138</sup> Some women kept shops, and carried on commerce; some even became scribes, indicating that girls as well as boys might receive an education.<sup>139</sup> But the Semitic practice of giving almost limitless power to the oldest male of the family won out against any matriarchal tendencies that may have existed in prehistoric Mesopotamia. Among the upper classes—by a custom that led to the *purdah* of Islam and India—the women were confined to certain quarters of the house; and when they went out they were chaperoned by eunuchs and pages.<sup>140</sup> Among the lower classes they were maternity machines, and if they had no dowry they were little more than slaves.<sup>141</sup> The worship of Ishtar suggests a certain reverence for woman and motherhood, like the worship of Mary in the Middle Ages; but we get no glimpse of chiv-

alry in Herodotus' report that the Babylonians, when besieged, "had strangled their wives, to prevent the consumption of their provisions."<sup>180</sup>

With some excuse, then, the Egyptians looked down upon the Babylonians as not quite civilized. We miss here the refinement of character and feeling indicated by Egyptian literature and art. When refinement came to Babylon it was in the guise of an effeminate degeneracy: young men dyed and curled their hair, perfumed their flesh, rouged their cheeks, and adorned themselves with necklaces, bangles, ear-rings and pendants. After the Persian Conquest the death of self-respect brought an end of self-restraint; the manners of the courtesan crept into every class; women of good family came to consider it mere courtesy to reveal their charms indiscriminately for the greatest happiness of the greatest number;<sup>181</sup> and "every man of the people in his poverty," if we may credit Herodotus, "prostituted his daughters for money."<sup>182</sup> "There is nothing more extraordinary than the manners of this city," wrote Quintus Curtius (42 A.D.), "and nowhere are things better arranged with a view to voluptuous pleasures."<sup>183</sup> Morals grew lax when the temples grew rich; and the citizens of Babylon, wedded to delight, bore with equanimity the subjection of their city by the Kassites, the Assyrians, the Persians, and the Greeks.

## VI. LETTERS AND LITERATURE

### *Cuneiform—Its decipherment—Language—Literature—The epic of Gilgamesh*

Did this life of venery, piety and trade receive any ennobling enshrinement in literary or artistic form? It is possible; we cannot judge a civilization from such fragments as the ocean of time has thrown up from the wreckage of Babylon. These fragments are chiefly liturgical, magical and commercial. Whether through accident or through cultural poverty, Babylonia, like Assyria and Persia, has left us a very middling heritage of literature as compared with Egypt and Palestine; its gifts were in commerce and law.

Nevertheless, scribes were as numerous in cosmopolitan Babylon as in Memphis or Thebes. The art of writing was still young enough to give its master a high rank in society; it was the open sesame to governmental and sacerdotal office; its possessor never failed to mention the distinction in narrating his deeds, and usually he engraved a notice of it on his cylinder seal,<sup>184</sup> precisely as Christian scholars and gentlemen once

listed their academic degrees on their cards. The Babylonians wrote in cuneiform upon tablets of damp clay, with a stylus or pencil cut at the end into a triangular prism or wedge; when the tablets were filled they dried and baked them into strange but durable manuscripts of brick. If the thing written was a letter it was dusted with powder and then wrapped in a clay envelope stamped with the sender's cylinder seal. Tablets in jars classified and arranged on shelves filled numerous libraries in the temples and palaces of Babylonia. These Babylonian libraries are lost; but one of the greatest of them, that of Borsippa, was copied and preserved in the library of Ashurbanipal, whose 30,000 tablets are the main source of our knowledge of Babylonian life.

The decipherment of Babylonian baffled students for centuries; their final success is an honorable chapter in the history of scholarship. In 1802 Georg Grotefend, professor of Greek at the University of Göttingen, told the Göttingen Academy how for years he had puzzled over certain cuneiform inscriptions from ancient Persia; how at last he had identified eight of the forty-two characters used, and had made out the names of three kings in the inscriptions. There, for the most part, the matter rested until 1835, when Henry Rawlinson, a British diplomatic officer stationed in Persia, quite unaware of Grotefend's work, likewise worked out the names of Hystaspes, Darius and Xerxes in an inscription couched in Old Persian, a cuneiform derivative of Babylonian script; and through these names he finally deciphered the entire document. This, however, was not Babylonian; Rawlinson had still to find, like Champollion, a Rosetta Stone—in this case some inscription bearing the same text in old Persian and Babylonian. He found it three hundred feet high on an almost inaccessible rock at Behistun, in the mountains of Media, where Darius I had caused his carvers to engrave a record of his wars and victories in three languages—old Persian, Assyrian, and Babylonian. Day after day Rawlinson risked himself on these rocks, often suspending himself by a rope, copying every character carefully, even making plastic impressions of all the engraved surfaces. *After twelve years of work* he succeeded in translating both the Babylonian and the Assyrian texts (1847). To test these and similar findings, the Royal Asiatic Society sent an unpublished cuneiform document to four Assyriologists, and asked them—working without contact or communication with one another—to make independent translations. The four reports were found to be in almost complete agreement. Through these unheralded campaigns of scholarship the perspective of history was enriched with a new civilization.<sup>184</sup>

The Babylonian language was a Semitic development of the old tongues of Sumeria and Akkad. It was written in characters originally Sumerian, but



the vocabulary diverged in time (like French from Latin) into a language so different from Sumerian that the Babylonians had to compose dictionaries and grammars to transmit the old "classic" and sacerdotal tongue of Sumeria to young scholars and priests. Almost a fourth of the tablets found in the royal library at Nineveh is devoted to dictionaries and grammars of the Sumerian, Babylonian and Assyrian languages. According to tradition, such dictionaries had been made as far back as Sargon of Akkad—so old is scholarship. In Babylonian, as in Sumerian, the characters represented not letters but syllables; Babylon never achieved an alphabet of its own, but remained content with a "syllabary" of some three hundred signs. The memorizing of these syllabic symbols formed, with mathematics and religious instruction, the curriculum of the temple schools in which the priests imparted to the young as much as it was expedient for them to know. One excavation unearthed an ancient classroom in which the clay tablets of boys and girls who had copied virtuous maxims upon them some two thousand years before Christ still lay on the floor, as if some almost welcome disaster had suddenly interrupted the lesson.<sup>187</sup>

The Babylonians, like the Phœnicians, looked upon letters as a device for facilitating business; they did not spend much of their clay upon literature. We find animal fables in verse—one generation of an endless dynasty; hymns in strict meter, sharply divided lines and elaborate stanzas;<sup>188</sup> very little surviving secular verse; religious rituals presaging, but never becoming, drama; and tons of historiography. Official chroniclers recorded the piety and conquests of the kings, the vicissitudes of each temple, and the important events in the career of each city. Berosus, the most famous of Babylonian historians (ca. 280 B.C.) narrated with confidence full details concerning the creation of the world and the early history of man: the first king of Babylonia had been chosen by a god, and had reigned 36,000 years; from the beginning of the world to the great Flood, said Berosus, with praiseworthy exactitude and comparative moderation, there had elapsed 691,200 years.<sup>189</sup>

Twelve broken tablets found in Ashurbanipal's library, and now in the British Museum, form the most fascinating relic of Mesopotamian literature—the *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Like the *Iliad* it is an accretion of loosely connected stories, some of which go back to Sumeria 3000 B.C.; part of it is the Babylonian account of the Flood. Gilgamesh was a legendary ruler of Uruk or Erech, a descendant of the Shamash-napishtim who had survived the Deluge, and had never died. Gilgamesh enters upon the scene as a sort of Adonis-Samson—tall, massive, heroically powerful and troublesomely handsome.

Two thirds of him is god,  
One third of him is man,  
There's none can match the form of his body. . . .  
All things he saw, even to the ends of the earth,  
He underwent all, learned to know all;  
He peered through all secrets,  
Through wisdom's mantle that veileth all.  
What was hidden he saw,  
What was covered he undid;  
Of times before the stormflood he brought report.  
He went on a long far way,  
Giving himself toil and distress;  
Wrote then on a stone tablet the whole of his labor.<sup>189</sup>

Fathers complain to Ishtar that he leads their sons out to exhausting toil "building the walls through the day, through the night"; and husbands complain that "he leaves not a wife to her master, not a single virgin to her mother." Ishtar begs Gilgamesh's godmother, Aruru, to create another son equal to Gilgamesh and able to keep him busy in conflict, so that the husbands of Uruk may have peace. Aruru kneads a bit of clay, spits upon it, and moulds from it the satyr Engidu, a man with the strength of a boar, the mane of a lion, and the speed of a bird. Engidu does not care for the society of men, but turns and lives with the animals; "he browses with the gazelles, he sports with the creatures of the water, he quenches his thirst with the beasts of the field." A hunter tries to capture him with nets and traps, but fails; and going to Gilgamesh, the hunter begs for the loan of a priestess who may snare Engidu with love. "Go, my hunter," says Gilgamesh, "take a priestess; when the beasts come to the watering-place let her display her beauty; he will see her, and his beasts that troop around him will be scattered."

The hunter and the priestess go forth, and find Engidu.

"There he is, woman!  
Loosen thy buckle,  
Unveil thy delight,  
That he may take his fill of thee!  
Hang not back, take up his lust!  
When he sees thee, he will draw near.  
Open thy robe that he rest upon thee!

Arouse in him rapture, the work of woman.  
Then will he become a stranger to his wild beasts,  
Who on his own steppes grew up with him.  
His bosom will press against thee."  
Then the priestess loosened her buckle,  
Unveiled her delight,  
For him to take his fill of her.  
She hung not back, she took up his lust,  
She opened her robe that he rest upon her.  
She aroused in him rapture, the work of woman.  
His bosom pressed against her.  
Engidu forgot where he was born.<sup>150</sup>

For six days but seven nights Engidu remains with the sacred woman. When he tires of pleasure he awakes to find his friends the animals gone, whereupon he swoons with sorrow. But the priestess chides him: "Thou who art superb as a god, why dost thou live among the beasts of the field? Come, I will conduct thee to Uruk, where is Gilgamesh, whose might is supreme." Ensnared by the vanity of praise and the conceit of his strength, Engidu follows the priestess to Uruk, saying, "Lead me to the place where is Gilgamesh. I will fight with him and manifest to him my power"; whereat the gods and husbands are well pleased. But Gilgamesh overcomes him, first with strength, then with kindness; they become devoted friends; they march forth together to protect Uruk from Elam; they return glorious with exploits and victory. Gilgamesh "put aside his war-harness, he put on his white garments, he adorned himself with the royal insignia, and bound on the diadem." Thereupon Ishtar the insatiate falls in love with him, raises her great eyes to him, and says:

"Come, Gilgamesh, be my husband, thou! Thy love, give it to me as a gift; thou shalt be my spouse, and I shall be thy wife. I shall place thee in a chariot of lapis and gold, with golden wheels and mountings of onyx; thou shalt be drawn in it by great lions, and thou shalt enter our house with the odorous incense of cedar-wood. . . . All the country by the sea shall embrace thy feet, kings shall bow down before thee, the gifts of the mountains and the plains they will bring before thee as tribute."

Gilgamesh rejects her, and reminds her of the hard fate she has inflicted upon her varied lovers, including Tammuz, a hawk, a stallion, a gardener

and a lion. "Thou lovest me now," he tells her; "afterwards thou wilt strike me as thou didst these." The angry Ishtar asks of the great god Anu that he create a wild urus to kill Gilgamesh. Anu refuses, and rebukes her: "Canst thou not remain quiet now that Gilgamesh has enumerated to thee thy unfaithfulness and ignominies?" She threatens that unless he grants her request she will suspend throughout the universe all the impulses of desire and love, and so destroy every living thing. Anu yields, and creates the ferocious urus; but Gilgamesh, helped by Engidu, overcomes the beast; and when Ishtar curses the hero, Engidu throws a limb of the urus into her face. Gilgamesh rejoices and is proud, but Ishtar strikes him down in the midst of his glory by afflicting Engidu with a mortal illness.

Mourning over the corpse of his friend, whom he has loved more than any woman, Gilgamesh wonders over the mystery of death. Is there no escape from that dull fatality? One man eluded it—Shamash-napishtim; he would know the secret of deathlessness. Gilgamesh resolves to seek Shamash-napishtim, even if he must cross the world to find him. The way leads through a mountain guarded by a pair of giants whose heads touch the sky and whose breasts reach down to Hades. But they let him pass, and he picks his way for twelve miles through a dark tunnel. He emerges upon the shore of a great ocean, and sees, far over the waters, the throne of Sabitu, virgin-goddess of the seas. He calls out to her to help him cross the water; "if it cannot be done, I will lay me down on the land and die." Sabitu takes pity upon him, and allows him to cross through forty days of tempest to the Happy Island where lives Shamash-napishtim, possessor of immortal life. Gilgamesh begs of him the secret of deathlessness. Shamash-napishtim answers by telling at length the story of the Flood, and how the gods, relenting of their mad destructiveness, had made him and his wife immortal because they had preserved the human species. He offers Gilgamesh a plant whose fruit will confer renewed youth upon him who eats it; and Gilgamesh, happy, starts back on his long journey home. But on the way he stops to bathe, and while he bathes a serpent crawls by and steals the plant.\*

Desolate, Gilgamesh reaches Uruk. He prays in temple after temple that Engidu may be allowed to return to life, if only to speak to him for a moment. Engidu appears, and Gilgamesh inquires of him the state of

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\* The snake was worshiped by many early peoples as a symbol of immortality, because of its apparent power to escape death by moulting its skin.

the dead. Engidu answers, "I cannot tell it thee; if I were to open the earth before thee, if I were to tell thee that which I have seen, terror would overthrow thee, thou wouldst faint away." Gilgamesh, symbol of that brave stupidity, philosophy, persists in his quest for truth: "Terror will overthrow me, I shall faint away, but tell it to me." Engidu describes the miseries of Hades, and on this gloomy note the fragmentary epic ends.<sup>140</sup>

## VII. ARTISTS

### *The lesser arts—Music—Painting—Sculpture—Bas-relief—Architecture*

The story of Gilgamesh is almost the only example by which we may judge the literary art of Babylon. That a keen esthetic sense, if not a profound creative spirit, survived to some degree the Babylonian absorption in commercial life, epicurean recreation and compensatory piety, may be seen in the chance relics of the minor arts. Patiently glazed tiles, glittering stones, finely wrought bronze, iron, silver and gold, delicate embroideries, soft rugs and richly dyed robes, luxurious tapestries, pedestaled tables, beds and chairs<sup>141</sup>—these lent grace, if not dignity or final worth, to Babylonian civilization. Jewelry abounded in quantity, but missed the subtle artistry of Egypt; it went in for a display of yellow metal, and thought it artistic to make entire statues of gold.<sup>142</sup> There were many musical instruments—flutes, psalteries, harps, bagpipes, lyres, drums, horns, reed-pipes, trumpets, cymbals and tambourines. Orchestras played and singers sang, individually and chorally, in temples and palaces, and at the feasts of the well-to-do.<sup>143</sup>

Painting was purely subsidiary; it decorated walls and statuary, but made no attempt to become an independent art.<sup>144</sup> We do not find among Babylonian ruins the distemper paintings that glorified the Egyptian tombs, or such frescoes as adorned the palaces of Crete. Babylonian sculpture remained similarly undeveloped, and was apparently stiffened into an early death by conventions derived from Sumeria and enforced by the priests: all the faces portrayed are one face, all the kings have the same thick and muscular frame, all the captives are cast in one mould. Very little Babylonian statuary survives, and that without excuse. The bas-reliefs are better, but they too are stereotyped and crude; a great gulf separates them from the mobile vigor of the reliefs that the Egyptians had carved a thousand years before; they



FIG. 26—*Painted limestone head of Ikhnaton's Queen Nofretete*  
Metropolitan Museum of Art facsimile of original in State Museum, Berlin

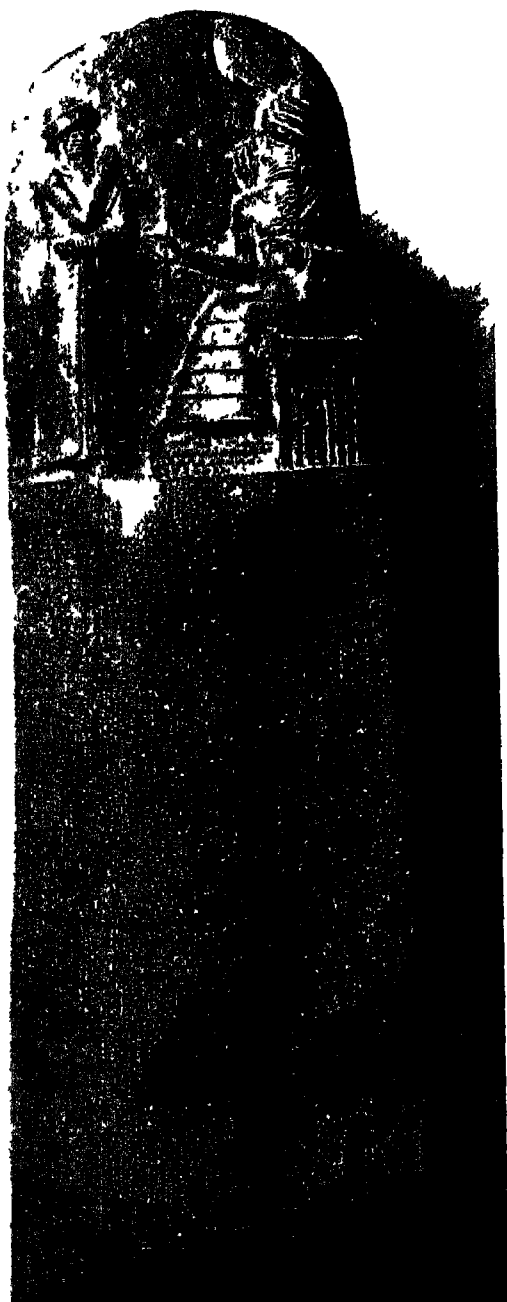


FIG. 27—*The god  
Shamash transmits  
a code of laws to  
Hammurabi*

Louvre; photo copy-  
right W. A. Mansell  
& Co., London



FIG. 28—The "Lion of Babylon." Painted tile-relief  
State Museum, Berlin; courtesy of the Metropolitan Museum of Art



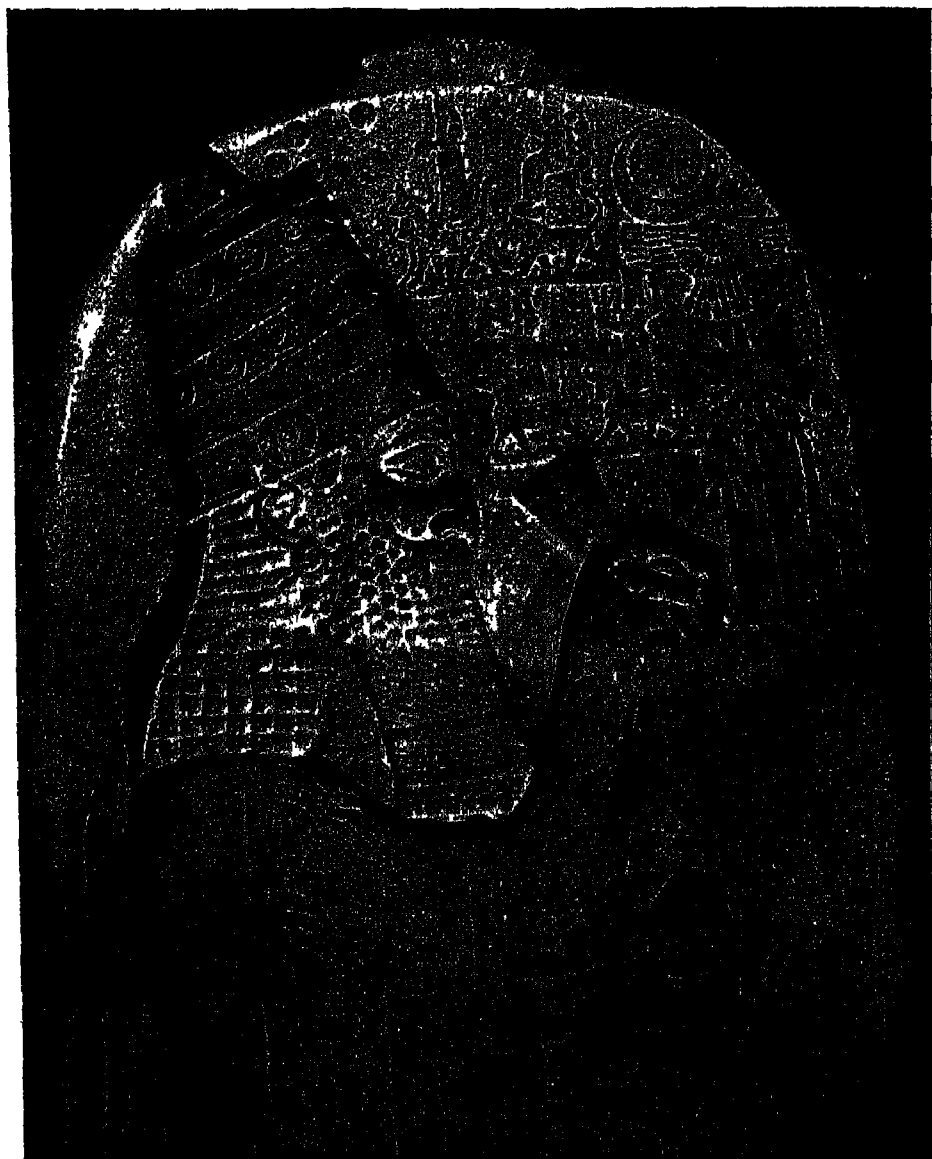


FIG. 29—*Head of Esarbaddon*  
State Museum, Berlin

reach sublimity only when they depict animals possessed of the silent dignity of nature, or enraged by the cruelty of men.<sup>145</sup>

Babylonian architecture is safe from judgment now, for hardly any of its remains rise to more than a few feet above the sands; and there are no carved or painted representations among the relics to show us clearly the form and structure of palaces and temples. Houses were built of dried mud, or, among the rich, of brick; they seldom knew windows, and their doors opened not upon the narrow street but upon an interior court shaded from the sun. Tradition describes the better dwellings as rising to three or four stories in height.<sup>146</sup> The temple was raised upon foundations level with the roofs of the houses whose life it was to dominate; usually it was an enormous square of tiled masonry, built, like the houses, around a court; in this court most of the religious ceremonies were performed. Near the temple, in most cases, rose a *ziggurat* (literally "a high place")—a tower of superimposed and diminishing cubical stories surrounded by external stairs. Its uses were partly religious, as a lofty shrine for the god, partly astronomic, as an observatory from which the priests could watch the all-revealing stars. The great *ziggurat* at Borsippa was called "The Stages of the Seven Spheres"; each story was dedicated to one of the seven planets known to Babylonia, and bore a symbolic color. The lowest was black, as the color of Saturn; the next above it was white, as the color of Venus; the next was purple, for Jupiter; the fourth blue, for Mercury; the fifth scarlet, for Mars; the sixth silver, for the moon; the seventh gold, for the sun. These spheres and stars, beginning at the top, designated the days of the week.<sup>147</sup>

There was not much art in this architecture, so far as we can vision it now; it was a mass of straight lines seeking the glory of size. Here and there among the ruins are vaults and arches—forms derived from Sumeria, negligently used, and unconscious of their destiny. Decoration, interior and exterior, was almost confined to enameling some of the brick surfaces with bright glazes of yellow, blue, white and red, with occasional tiled figures of animals or plants. The use of vitrified glaze, not merely to beautify, but to protect the masonry from sun and rain, was at least as old as Naram-sin, and was to continue in Mesopotamia down to Moslem days. In this way ceramics, though seldom producing rememberable pottery, became the most characteristic art of the ancient Near East. Despite such aid, Babylonian architecture remained a heavy and prosaic thing, condemned to mediocrity by the material it used. The temples rose rapidly out of the earth which slave labor turned so readily into brick and cementing pitch; they did not require centuries for their erection, like the monumental structures of Egypt or medieval Europe. But they decayed almost as quickly as they rose; fifty years of neglect reduced them to the dust from which they had been made.<sup>148</sup>

The very cheapness of brick corrupted Babylonian design; with such materials it was easy to achieve size, difficult to compass beauty. Brick does not lend itself to sublimity, and sublimity is the soul of architecture.

#### VIII. BABYLONIAN SCIENCE

##### *Mathematics—Astronomy—The calendar—Geography—Medicine*

Being merchants, the Babylonians were more likely to achieve successes in science than in art. Commerce created mathematics, and united with religion to beget astronomy. In their varied functions as judges, administrators, agricultural and industrial magnates, and soothsayers skilled in examining entrails and stars, the priests of Mesopotamia unconsciously laid the foundations of those sciences which, in the profane hands of the Greeks, were for a time to depose religion from its leadership of the world.

Babylonian mathematics rested on a division of the circle into 360 degrees, and of the year into 360 days; on this basis it developed a sexagesimal system of calculation by sixties, which became the parent of later duodecimal systems of reckoning by twelves. The numeration used only three figures: a sign for 1, repeated up to 9; a sign for 10, repeated up to 50; and a sign for 100. Computation was made easier by tables which showed not only multiplication and division, but the halves, quarters, thirds, squares and cubes of the basic numbers. Geometry advanced to the measurement of complex and irregular areas. The Babylonian figure for  $\pi$  (the ratio of the circumference to the diameter of a circle) was 3—a very crude approximation for a nation of astronomers.

Astronomy was the special science of the Babylonians, for which they were famous throughout the ancient world. Here again magic was the mother of science: the Babylonians studied the stars not so much to chart the courses of caravans and ships, as to divine the future fates of men; they were astrologers first and astronomers afterward. Every planet was a god, interested and vital in the affairs of men: Jupiter was Marduk, Mercury was Nabu, Mars was Nergal, the sun was Shamash, the moon was Sin, Saturn was Ninib, Venus was Ishtar. Every movement of every star determined, or forecast, some terrestrial event: if, for example, the moon was low, a distant nation would submit to the king; if the moon was in crescent the king would overcome the enemy. Such efforts to wring the future out of the stars became a passion with the Babylonians; priests

skilled in astrology reaped rich rewards from both people and king. Some of them were sincere students, poring zealously over astrologic tomes which, according to their traditions, had been composed in the days of Sargon of Akkad; they complained of the quacks who, without such study, went about reading horoscopes for a fee, or predicting the weather a year ahead, in the fashion of our modern almanacs.<sup>149</sup>

Astronomy developed slowly out of this astrologic observation and charting of the stars. As far back as 2000 B.C. the Babylonians had made accurate records of the heliacal rising and setting of the planet Venus; they had fixed the position of various stars, and were slowly mapping the sky.<sup>150</sup> The Kassite conquest interrupted this development for a thousand years. Then, under Nebuchadrezzar, astronomic progress was resumed; the priest-scientists plotted the orbits of sun and moon, noted their conjunctions and eclipses, calculated the courses of the planets, and made the first clear distinction between a planet and a star;<sup>\*151</sup> they determined the dates of winter and summer solstices, of vernal and autumnal equinoxes, and, following the lead of the Sumerians, divided the ecliptic (i.e., the path of the earth around the sun) into the twelve signs of the Zodiac. Having divided the circle into 360 degrees, they divided the degree into sixty minutes, and the minute into sixty seconds.<sup>152</sup> They measured time by a clepsydra or water-clock, and a sun-dial, and these seem to have been not merely developed but invented by them.<sup>153</sup>

They divided the year into twelve lunar months, six having thirty days, six twenty-nine; and as this made but 354 days in all, they added a thirteenth month occasionally to harmonize the calendar with the seasons. The month was divided into four weeks according to the four phases of the moon. An attempt was made to establish a more convenient calendar by dividing the month into six weeks of five days; but the phases of the moon proved more effective than the conveniences of men. The day was reckoned not from midnight to midnight but from one rising of the moon to the next;<sup>154</sup> it was divided into twelve hours, and each of these hours was divided into thirty minutes, so that the Babylonian minute had the feminine quality of being four times as long as its name might suggest. The division of our month into four weeks, of our clock into twelve hours (instead of twenty-four), of our hour into sixty minutes, and of

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\* To the Babylonians a planet was distinguished from the "fixed" stars by its observable motion or "wandering." In modern astronomy a planet is defined as a heavenly body regularly revolving about the sun.

our minute into sixty seconds, are unsuspected Babylonian vestiges in our contemporary world.<sup>†</sup>

The dependence of Babylonian science upon religion had a more stagnant effect in medicine than in astronomy. It was not so much the obscurantism of the priests that held the science back, as the superstition of the people. Already by the time of Hammurabi the art of healing had separated itself in some measure from the domain and domination of the clergy; a regular profession of physician had been established, with fees and penalties fixed by law. A patient who called in a doctor could know in advance just how much he would have to pay for such treatment or operation; and if he belonged to the poorer classes the fee was lowered accordingly.<sup>107</sup> If the doctor bungled badly he had to pay damages to the patient; in extreme cases, as we have seen, his fingers were cut off so that he might not readily experiment again.<sup>108</sup>

But this almost secularized science found itself helpless before the demand of the people for supernatural diagnosis and magical cures. Sorcerers and necromancers were more popular than physicians, and enforced, by their influence with the populace, irrational methods of treatment. Disease was possession, and was due to sin; therefore it had to be treated mainly by incantations, magic and prayer; when drugs were used they were aimed not to cleanse the patient but to terrify and exorcise the demon. The favorite drug was a mixture deliberately compounded of disgusting elements, apparently on the theory that the sick man had a stronger stomach than the demon that possessed him; the usual ingredients were raw meat, snake-flesh and wood-shavings mixed with wine and oil; or rotten food, crushed bones, fat and dirt, mingled with animal or human urine or excrement.<sup>109</sup> Occasionally this *Dreckapothek* was replaced by an effort to appease the demon with milk, honey, cream, and sweet-smelling herbs.<sup>110</sup> If all treatment failed, the patient was in some cases carried into the market-place, so that his neighbors might indulge their ancient propensity for prescribing infallible cures.<sup>111</sup>

Perhaps the eight hundred medical tablets that survive to inform us

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\* From charting the skies the Babylonians turned to mapping the earth. The oldest maps of which we have any knowledge were those which the priests prepared of the roads and cities of Nebuchadrezzar's empire.<sup>112</sup> A clay tablet found in the ruins of Gasur (two hundred miles north of Babylon), and dated back to 1600 B.C., contains, in a space hardly an inch square, a map of the province of Shat-Azalla; it represents mountains by rounded lines, water by tilting lines, rivers by parallel lines; the names of various towns are inscribed, and the direction of north and south is indicated in the margin.<sup>113</sup>

of Babylonian medicine do it injustice. Reconstruction of the whole from a part is hazardous in history, and the writing of history is the reconstruction of the whole from a part. Quite possibly these magical cures were merely subtle uses of the power of suggestion; perhaps those evil concoctions were intended as emetics; and the Babylonian may have meant nothing more irrational by his theory of illness as due to invading demons and the patient's sins than we do by interpreting it as due to invading bacteria invited by culpable negligence, uncleanness, or greed. We must not be too sure of the ignorance of our ancestors.

#### IX. PHILOSOPHERS

##### *Religion and Philosophy—The Babylonian Job—The Babylonian Koheleth—An anti-clerical*

A nation is born stoic, and dies epicurean. At its cradle (to repeat a thoughtful adage) religion stands, and philosophy accompanies it to the grave. In the beginning of all cultures a strong religious faith conceals and softens the nature of things, and gives men courage to bear pain and hardship patiently; at every step the gods are with them, and will not let them perish, until they do. Even then a firm faith will explain that it was the sins of the people that turned their gods to an avenging wrath; evil does not destroy faith, but strengthens it. If victory comes, if war is forgotten in security and peace, then wealth grows; the life of the body gives way, in the dominant classes, to the life of the senses and the mind; toil and suffering are replaced by pleasure and ease; science weakens faith even while thought and comfort weaken virility and fortitude. At last men begin to doubt the gods; they mourn the tragedy of knowledge, and seek refuge in every passing delight. Achilles is at the beginning, Epicurus at the end. After David comes Job, and after Job, Ecclesiastes.

Since we know the thought of Babylon mostly from the later reigns, it is natural that we should find it shot through with the weary wisdom of tired philosophers who took their pleasures like Englishmen. On one tablet Balta-atrua complains that though he has obeyed the commands of the gods more strictly than any one else, he has been laid low with a variety of misfortunes; he has lost his parents and his property, and even the little that remained to him has been stolen on the highway. His friends, like Job's, reply that his disaster must be in punishment of some secret sin—perhaps that *hybris*, or insolent pride of prosperity, which

particularly arouses the jealous anger of the gods. They assure him that evil is merely good in disguise, some part of the divine plan seen too narrowly by frail minds unconscious of the whole. Let Balta-atrua keep faith and courage, and he will be rewarded in the end; better still, his enemies will be punished. Balta-atrua calls out to the gods for help—and the fragment suddenly ends.<sup>102</sup>

Another poem, found among the ruins of Ashurbanipal's collection of Babylonian literature, presents the same problem more definitely in the person of Tabi-utul-Enlil, who appears to have been a ruler in Nippur. He describes his difficulties: \*

(My eyeballs he obscured, bolting them as with) a lock;  
(My ears he bolted), like those of a deaf person.  
A king, I have been changed into a slave;  
As a madman (my) companions maltreat me.  
Send me help from the pit dug (for me)! . . .  
By day deep sighs, at night weeping;  
The month—cries; the year—distress. . . .

He goes on to tell what a pious fellow he has always been, the very last man in the world who should have met with so cruel a fate:

As though I had not always set aside the portion for the god,  
And had not invoked the goddess at the meal,  
Had not bowed my face and brought my tribute;  
As though I were one in whose mouth supplication and prayer were  
not constant! . . .  
I taught my country to guard the name of the god;  
To honor the name of the goddess I accustomed my people. . . .  
I thought that such things were pleasing to a god.

Stricken with disease despite all this formal piety, he muses on the impossibility of understanding the gods, and on the uncertainty of human affairs.

Who is there that can grasp the will of the gods in heaven?  
The plan of a god full of mystery—who can understand it? . . .  
He who was alive yesterday is dead today;  
In an instant he is cast into grief; of a sudden he is crushed.

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\* Parenthetical passages are guesses.

For a moment he sings and plays;  
In a twinkling he wails like a mourner. . . .  
Like a net trouble has covered me.  
My eyes look but see not;  
My ears are open but they hear not. . . .  
Pollution has fallen upon my genitals,  
And it has assailed the glands in my bowels. . . .  
With death grows dark my whole body. . . .  
All day the pursuer pursues me;  
During the night he gives me no breath for a moment. . . .  
My limbs are dismembered, they march out of unison.  
In my dung I pass the night like an ox;  
Like a sheep I mix in my excrements. . . .

Like Job, he makes another act of faith:

But I know the day of the cessation of my tears,  
A day of the grace of the protecting spirits; then divinity will be  
merciful.<sup>100</sup>

In the end everything turns out happily. A spirit appears, and cures all of Tabi's ailments; a mighty storm drives all the demons of disease out of his frame. He praises Marduk, offers rich sacrifice, and calls upon every one never to despair of the gods.\*

As there is but a step from this to the *Book of Job*, so we find in late Babylonian literature unmistakable premonitions of Ecclesiastes. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh* the goddess Sabitu advises the hero to give up his longing for a life after death, and to eat, drink and be merry on the earth.

O Gilgamesh, why dost thou run in all directions?  
The life that thou seekest thou wilt not find.  
When the gods created mankind they determined death for mankind;  
Life they kept in their own hands.  
Thou, O Gilgamesh, fill thy belly;  
Day and night be thou merry; . . .  
Day and night be joyous and content!  
Let thy garments be pure,

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\* It is probable that this composition, prototypes of which are found in Sumeria, influenced the author of the *Book of Job*.<sup>101</sup>



Thy head be washed; wash thyself with water!  
Regard the little one who takes hold of thy hand;  
Enjoy the wife in thy bosom.<sup>105\*</sup>

In another tablet we hear a bitterer note, culminating in atheism and blasphemy. Gubarru, a Babylonian Alcibiades, interrogates an elder sceptically:

O very wise one, O possessor of intelligence, let thy heart groan!  
The heart of God is as far as the inner parts of the heavens.  
Wisdom is hard, and men do not understand it.

To which the old man answers with a forboding of Amos and Isaiah:

Give attention, my friend, and understand my thought.  
Men exalt the work of the great man who is skilled in murder.  
They disparage the poor man who has done no sin.  
They justify the wicked man, whose fault is grave.  
They drive away the just man who seeks the will of God.  
They let the strong take the food of the poor;  
They strengthen the mighty;  
They destroy the weak man, the rich man drives him away.

He advises Gubarru to do the will of the gods none the less. But Gubarru will have nothing to do with gods or priests who are always on the side of the biggest fortunes:

They have offered lies and untruth without ceasing.  
They say in noble words what is in favor of the rich man.  
Is his wealth diminished? They come to his help.  
They ill-treat the weak man like a thief,  
They destroy him in a tremor, they extinguish him like a flame.<sup>106</sup>

We must not exaggerate the prevalence of such moods in Babylon; doubtless the people listened lovingly to their priests, and crowded the temples to seek favors of the gods. The marvel is that they were so long

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\* Cf. *Ecclesiastes*, ix, 7-9: "Go thy way, eat thy bread with joy, and drink thy wine with a merry heart; for God now accepteth thy works. Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment. Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of the life of thy vanity."

loyal to a religion that offered them so little consolation. Nothing could be known, said the priests, except by divine revelation; and this revelation came only through the priests. The last chapter of that revelation told how the dead soul, whether good or bad, descended into Aralu, or Hades, to spend there an eternity in darkness and suffering. Is it any wonder that Babylon gave itself to revelry, while Nebuchadrezzar, having all, understanding nothing, fearing everything, went mad?

#### X. EPITAPH

Tradition and the *Book of Daniel*, unverified by any document known to us, tell how Nebuchadrezzar, after a long reign of uninterrupted victory and prosperity, after beautifying his city with roads and palaces, and erecting fifty-four temples to the gods, fell into a strange insanity, thought himself a beast, walked on all fours, and ate grass.<sup>107</sup> For four years his name disappears from the history and governmental records of Babylonia;<sup>108</sup> it reappears for a moment, and then, in 562 B.C., he passes away.

Within thirty years after his death his empire crumbled to pieces. Nabonidus, who held the throne for seventeen years, preferred archeology to government, and devoted himself to excavating the antiquities of Sumeria while his own realm was going to ruin.<sup>109</sup> The army fell into disorder; business men forgot love of country in the sublime internationalism of finance; the people, busy with trade and pleasure, unlearned the arts of war. The priests usurped more and more of the royal power, and fattened their treasuries with wealth that tempted invasion and conquest. When Cyrus and his disciplined Persians stood at the gates, the anticlericals of Babylon connived to open the city to him, and welcomed his enlightened domination.<sup>110</sup> For two centuries Persia ruled Babylonia as part of the greatest empire that history had yet known. Then the exuberant Alexander came, captured the unresisting capital, conquered all the Near East, and drank himself to death in the palace of Nebruchadrezzar.<sup>111</sup>

The civilization of Babylonia was not as fruitful for humanity as Egypt's, not as varied and profound as India's, not as subtle and mature as China's. And yet it was from Babylonia that those fascinating legends came which, through the literary artistry of the Jews, became an inseparable portion of Europe's religious lore; it was from Babylonia, rather than from Egypt, that the roving Greeks brought to their city-states,

and thence to Rome and ourselves, the foundations of mathematics, astronomy, medicine, grammar, lexicography, archeology, history, and philosophy. The Greek names for the metals and the constellations, for weights and measures, for musical instruments and many drugs, are translations, sometimes mere transliterations, of Babylonian names.<sup>14</sup> While Greek architecture derived its forms and inspiration from Egypt and Crete, Babylonian architecture, through the *ziggurat*, led to the towers of Moslem mosques, the steeples and campaniles of medieval art, and the "setback" style of contemporary architecture in America. The laws of Hammurabi became for all ancient societies a legacy comparable to Rome's gift of order and government to the modern world. Through Assyria's conquest of Babylon, her appropriation of the ancient city's culture, and her dissemination of that culture throughout her wide empire; through the long Captivity of the Jews, and the great influence upon them of Babylonian life and thought; through the Persian and Greek conquests, which opened with unprecedented fulness and freedom all the roads of communication and trade between Babylon and the rising cities of Ionia, Asia Minor and Greece—through these and many other ways the civilization of the Land between the Rivers passed down into the cultural endowment of our race. In the end nothing is lost; for good or evil every event has effects forever.

## CHAPTER X

# Assyria

### I. CHRONICLES

*Beginnings — Cities — Race — The conquerors — Sennacherib and Esarbaddon — "Sardanapalus"*

MEANWHILE, three hundred miles north of Babylon, another civilization had appeared. Forced to maintain a hard military life by the mountain tribes always threatening it on every side, it had in time overcome its assailants, had conquered its parent cities in Elam, Sumeria, Akkad and Babylonia, had mastered Phœnicia and Egypt, and had for two centuries dominated the Near East with brutal power. Sumeria was to Babylonia, and Babylonia to Assyria, what Crete was to Greece, and Greece to Rome: the first created a civilization, the second developed it to its height, the third inherited it, added little to it, protected it, and transmitted it as a dying gift to the encompassing and victorious barbarians. For barbarism is always around civilization, amid it and beneath it, ready to engulf it by arms, or mass migration, or unchecked fertility. Barbarism is like the jungle; it never admits its defeat; it waits patiently for centuries to recover the territory it has lost.

The new state grew about four cities fed by the waters or tributaries of the Tigris: Ashur, which is now Kala'at-Sherghat; Arbela, which is Irbil; Kalakh, which is Nimrud; and Nineveh, which is Kuyunjik—just across the river from oily Mosul. At Ashur prehistoric obsidian flakes and knives have been found, and black pottery with geometric patterns that suggest a central Asian origin;<sup>1</sup> at Tepe Gawra, near the site of Nineveh, a recent expedition unearthed a town which its proud discoverers date back to 3700 B.C., despite its many temples and tombs, its well-carved cylinder seals, its combs and jewelry, and the oldest dice known to history<sup>2</sup>—a thought for reformers. The god Ashur gave his name to a city (and finally to all Assyria); there the earliest of the nation's kings had their residence, until its exposure to the heat of the desert and the attacks of the neighboring Babylonians led Ashur's rulers to build a secondary

capital in cooler Nineveh—named also after a god, Nina, the Ishtar of Assyria. Here, in the heyday of Ashurbanipal, 300,000 people lived, and all the western Orient came to pay tribute to the Universal King.

The population was a mixture of Semites from the civilized south (Babylonia and Akkadia) with non-Semitic tribes from the west (probably of Hittite or Mitannian affinity) and Kurdish mountaineers from the Caucasus.<sup>3</sup> They took their common language and their arts from Sumeria, but modified them later into an almost undistinguishable similarity to the language and arts of Babylonia.<sup>4</sup> Their circumstances, however, forbade them to indulge in the effeminate ease of Babylon; from beginning to end they were a race of warriors, mighty in muscle and courage, abounding in proud hair and beard, standing straight, stern and stolid on their monuments, and bestriding with tremendous feet the east-Mediterranean world. Their history is one of kings and slaves, wars and conquests, bloody victories and sudden defeat. The early kings—once mere *patesis* tributary to the south—took advantage of the Kassite domination of Babylonia to establish their independence; and soon enough one of them decked himself with that title which all the monarchs of Assyria were to display: "King of Universal Reign." Out of the dull dynasties of these forgotten potentates certain figures emerge whose deeds illuminate the development of their country.\*

While Babylonia was still in the darkness of the Kassite era, Shalmaneser I brought the little city-states of the north under one rule, and made Kalakh his capital. But the first great name in Assyrian history is Tiglath-Pileser I. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord: if it is wise to believe monarchs, he slew 120 lions on foot, and 800 from his chariot.<sup>5</sup> One of his inscriptions—written by a scribe more royalist than the King—tells how he hunted nations as well as animals: "In my fierce valor I marched against the people of Qummuh, conquered their cities, carried off their booty, their goods and their property without reckoning, and burned their cities with fire—destroyed and devastated them. . . . The people of Adansh left their mountains and embraced my feet. I imposed taxes upon them."<sup>6</sup> In every direction he led his armies, conquering the Hittites, the Armenians, and forty other nations, capturing Babylon, and frightening Egypt into sending him anxious gifts. (He was particularly mollified by a crocodile.) With the proceeds of his conquests he built temples to the Assyrian gods and goddesses, who, like anxious

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\* A tablet recently found in the ruins of Sargon II's library at Khorsabad contains an unbroken list of Assyrian kings from the twenty-third century B.C. to Ashurnirari (753-46 B.C.).<sup>7</sup>

*débutantes*, asked no questions about the source of his wealth. Then Babylon revolted, defeated his armies, pillaged his temples, and carried his gods into Babylonian captivity. Tiglath-Pileser died of shame.<sup>7</sup>

His reign was a symbol and summary of all Assyrian history: death and taxes, first for Assyria's neighbors, then for herself. Ashurnasirpal II conquered a dozen petty states, bought much booty home from the wars, cut out with his own hand the eyes of princely captives, enjoyed his harem, and passed respectably away.<sup>8</sup> Shalmaneser III carried these conquests as far as Damascus; fought costly battles, killing 16,000 Syrians in one engagement; built temples, levied tribute, and was deposed by his son in a violent revolution.<sup>9</sup> Sammuramat ruled as queen-mother for three years, and provided a frail historical basis (for this is all that we know of her) for the Greek legend of Semiramis—half goddess and half queen, great general, great engineer and great statesman—so attractively detailed by Diodorus the Sicilian.<sup>10</sup> Tiglath-Pileser III gathered new armies, reconquered Armenia, overran Syria and Babylonia, made vassal cities of Damascus, Samaria and Babylon, extended the rule of Assyria from the Caucasus to Egypt, tired of war, became an excellent administrator, built many temples and palaces, held his empire together with an iron hand, and died peacefully in bed. Sargon II, an officer in the army, made himself king by a Napoleonic *coup d'état*; led his troops in person, and took in every engagement the most dangerous post;<sup>11</sup> defeated Elam and Egypt, reconquered Babylonia, and received the homage of the Jews, the Philistines, even of the Cypriote Greeks; ruled his empire well, encouraged arts and letters, handicrafts and trade, and died in a victorious battle that definitely preserved Assyria from invasion by the wild Cimmerian hordes.

His son Sennacherib put down revolts in the distant provinces adjoining the Persian Gulf, attacked Jerusalem and Egypt without success,\* sacked eighty-nine cities and 820 villages, captured 7,200 horses, 11,000 asses, 80,000 oxen, 800,000 sheep, and 208,000 prisoners;<sup>12</sup> the official historian, on his life, did not understate these figures. Then, irritated by the prejudice of Babylon in favor of freedom, he besieged it, took it, and burned it to the ground; nearly all the inhabitants, young and old, male and female, were put to death, so that mountains of corpses blocked the streets; the temples and palaces were pillaged to the last *shekel*, and the once omnipotent gods of Babylon were hacked to pieces or carried in

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\* Egyptian tradition attributed the escape of Egypt to discriminating field mice who ate up the quivers, bow-strings and shield-straps of the Assyrians encamped before Pelusium, so that the Egyptians were enabled to defeat the invaders easily the next day.<sup>12</sup>

bondage to Nineveh: Marduk *the* god became a menial to Ashur. Such Babylonians as survived did not conclude that Marduk had been over-rated; they told themselves—as the captive Jews would tell themselves a century later in that same Babylon—that their god had condescended to be defeated in order to punish his people. With the spoils of his conquests and pillage Sennacherib rebuilt Nineveh, changed the courses of rivers to protect it, reclaimed waste lands with the vigor of countries suffering from an agricultural surplus, and was assassinated by his sons while piously mumbling his prayers.<sup>14</sup>

Another son, Esarhaddon, snatched the throne from his blood-stained brothers, invaded Egypt to punish her for supporting Syrian revolts, made her an Assyrian province, amazed western Asia with his long triumphal progress from Memphis to Nineveh, dragging endless booty in his train; established Assyria in unprecedented prosperity as master of the whole Near Eastern world; delighted Babylonia by freeing and honoring its captive gods, and rebuilding its shattered capital; conciliated Elam by feeding its famine-stricken people in an act of international beneficence almost without parallel in the ancient world; and died on the way to suppress a revolt in Egypt, after giving his empire the justest and kindest rule in its half-barbarous history.

His successor, Ashurbanipal (the Sardanapalus of the Greeks), reaped the fruits of Esarhaddon's sowing. During his long reign Assyria reached the climax of its wealth and prestige; after him his country, ruined by forty years of intermittent war, fell into exhaustion and decay, and ended its career hardly a decade after Ashurbanipal's death. A scribe has preserved to us a yearly record of this reign;<sup>15</sup> it is a dull and bloody mess of war after war, siege after siege, starved cities and flayed captives. The scribe represents Ashurbanipal himself as reporting his destruction of Elam:

For a distance of one month and twenty-five days' march I devastated the districts of Elam. I spread salt and thorn-bush there (to injure the soil). Sons of the kings, sisters of the kings, members of Elam's royal family young and old, prefects, governors, knights, artisans, as many as there were, inhabitants male and female, big and little, horses, mules, asses, flocks and herds more numerous than a swarm of locusts—I carried them off as booty to Assyria. The dust of Susa, of Madaktu, of Haltemash and of their other cities, I carried it off to Assyria. In a month of days I subdued Elam in its whole

extent. The voice of man, the steps of flocks and herds, the happy shouts of mirth—I put an end to them in its fields, which I left for the asses, the gazelles, and all manner of wild beasts to people.<sup>17</sup>

The severed head of the Elamite king was brought to Ashurbanipal as he feasted with his queen in the palace garden; he had the head raised on a pole in the midst of his guests, and the royal revel went on; later the head was fixed over the gate of Nineveh, and slowly rotted away. The Elamite general, Dananu, was flayed alive, and then was bled like a lamb; his brother had his throat cut, and his body was divided into pieces, which were distributed over the country as souvenirs.<sup>18</sup>

It never occurred to Ashurbanipal that he and his men were brutal; these clean-cut penalties were surgical necessities in his attempt to remove rebellions and establish discipline among the heterogeneous and turbulent peoples, from Ethiopia to Armenia, and from Syria to Media, whom his predecessors had subjected to Assyrian rule; it was his obligation to maintain this legacy intact. He boasted of the peace that he had established in his empire, and of the good order that prevailed in its cities; and the boast was not without truth. That he was not merely a conqueror intoxicated with blood he proved by his munificence as a builder and as a patron of letters and the arts. Like some Roman ruler calling to the Greeks, he sent to all his dominions for sculptors and architects to design and adorn new temples and palaces; he commissioned innumerable scribes to secure and copy for him all the classics of Sumerian and Babylonian literature, and gathered these copies in his library at Nineveh, where modern scholarship found them almost intact after twenty-five centuries of time had flowed over them. Like another Frederick, he was as vain of his literary abilities as of his triumphs in war and the chase.<sup>19</sup> Diodorus describes him as a dissolute and bisexual Nero,<sup>20</sup> but in the wealth of documents that have come down to us from this period there is little corroboration for this view. From the composition of literary tablets Ashurbanipal passed with royal confidence—armed only with knife and javelin—to hand-to-hand encounters with lions; if we may credit the reports of his contemporaries he did not hesitate to lead the attack in person, and often dealt with his own hand the decisive blow.<sup>21</sup> Little wonder that Byron was fascinated with him, and wove about him a drama half legend and half history, in which all the wealth and power of Assyria came to their height, and broke into universal ruin and royal despair.



## II. ASSYRIAN GOVERNMENT

*Imperialism—Assyrian war—The conscript gods—Law—Delicacies of penology—Administration—The violence of Oriental monarchies*

If we should admit the imperial principle—that it is good, for the sake of spreading law, security, commerce and peace, that many states should be brought, by persuasion or force, under the authority of one government—then we should have to concede to Assyria the distinction of having established in western Asia a larger measure and area of order and prosperity than that region of the earth had ever, to our knowledge, enjoyed before. The government of Ashurbanipal—which ruled Assyria, Babylonia, Armenia, Media, Palestine, Syria, Phœnicia, Sumeria, Elam and Egypt—was without doubt the most extensive administrative organization yet seen in the Mediterranean or Near Eastern world; only Hammurabi and Thutmose III had approached it, and Persia alone would equal it before the coming of Alexander. In some ways it was a liberal empire; its larger cities retained considerable local autonomy, and each nation in it was left its own religion, law and ruler, provided it paid its tribute promptly.<sup>m</sup> In so loose an organization every weakening of the central power was bound to produce rebellions, or, at the best, a certain tributary negligence, so that the subject states had to be conquered again and again. To avoid these recurrent rebellions Tiglath-Pileser III established the characteristic Assyrian policy of deporting conquered populations to alien habitats, where, mingling with the natives, they might lose their unity and identity, and have less opportunity to rebel. Revolts came nevertheless, and Assyria had to keep herself always ready for war.

The army was therefore the most vital part of the government. Assyria recognized frankly that government is the nationalization of force, and her chief contributions to progress were in the art of war. Chariots, cavalry, infantry and sappers were organized into flexible formations, siege mechanisms were as highly developed as among the Romans, strategy and tactics were well understood.<sup>n</sup> Tactics centered about the idea of rapid movement making possible a piecemeal attack—so old is the secret of Napoleon. Iron-working had grown to the point of encasing the warrior with armor to a degree of stiffness rivaling a medieval knight; even the archers and pikemen wore copper or iron helmets, padded loin-cloths,

enormous shields, and a leather skirt covered with metal scales. The weapons were arrows, lances, cutlasses, maces, clubs, slings and battle-axes. The nobility fought from chariots in the van of the battle, and the king, in his royal chariot, usually led them in person; generals had not yet learned to die in bed. Ashurnasirpal introduced the use of cavalry as an aid to the chariots, and this innovation proved decisive in many engagements.<sup>21</sup> The principal siege engine was a battering-ram tipped with iron; sometimes it was suspended from a scaffold by ropes, and was swung back to give it forward impetus; sometimes it was run forward on wheels. The besieged fought from the walls with missiles, torches, burning pitch, chains designed to entangle the ram, and gaseous "stink-pots" (as they were called) to befuddle the enemy;<sup>22</sup> again the novel is not new. A captured city was usually plundered and burnt to the ground, and its site was deliberately denuded by killing its trees.<sup>23</sup> The loyalty of the troops was secured by dividing a large part of the spoils among them; their bravery was ensured by the general rule of the Near East that all captives in war might be enslaved or slain. Soldiers were rewarded for every severed head they brought in from the field, so that the aftermath of a victory generally witnessed the wholesale decapitation of fallen foes.<sup>24</sup> Most often the prisoners, who would have consumed much food in a long campaign, and would have constituted a danger and nuisance in the rear, were despatched after the battle; they knelt with their backs to their captors, who beat their heads in with clubs, or cut them off with cutlasses. Scribes stood by to count the number of prisoners taken and killed by each soldier, and apportioned the booty accordingly; the king, if time permitted, presided at the slaughter. The nobles among the defeated were given more special treatment: their ears, noses, hands and feet were sliced off, or they were thrown from high towers, or they and their children were beheaded, or flayed alive, or roasted over a slow fire. No compunction seems to have been felt at this waste of human life; the birth rate would soon make up for it, and meanwhile it relieved the pressure of population upon the means of subsistence.<sup>25</sup> Probably it was in part by their reputation for mercy to prisoners of war that Alexander and Caesar undermined the morale of the enemy, and conquered the Mediterranean world.

Next to the army the chief reliance of the monarch was upon the church, and he paid lavishly for the support of the priests. The formal head of the

state was by concerted fiction the god Ashur; all pronouncements were in his name, all laws were edicts of his divine will, all taxes were collected for his treasury, all campaigns were fought to furnish him (or, occasionally, another deity) with spoils and glory. The king had himself described as a god, usually an incarnation of Shamash, the sun. The religion of Assyria, like its language, its science and its arts, was imported from Sumeria and Babylonia, with occasional adaptations to the needs of a military state.

The adaptation was most visible in the case of the law, which was distinguished by a martial ruthlessness. Punishment ranged from public exhibition to forced labor, twenty to a hundred lashes, the slitting of nose and ears, castration, pulling out the tongue, gouging out the eyes, impalement, and beheading.<sup>28</sup> The laws of Sargon II prescribe such additional delicacies as the drinking of poison, and the burning of the offender's son or daughter alive on the altar of the god;<sup>29</sup> but there is no evidence of these laws being carried out in the last millennium before Christ. Adultery, rape and some forms of theft were considered capital crimes.<sup>30</sup> Trial by ordeal was occasionally employed; the accused, sometimes bound in fetters, was flung into the river, and his guilt was left to the arbitrament of the water. In general Assyrian law was less secular and more primitive than the Babylonian Code of Hammurabi, which apparently preceded it in time.\*

Local administration, originally by feudal barons, fell in the course of time into the hands of provincial prefects or governors appointed by the king; this form of imperial government was taken over by Persia, and passed on from Persia to Rome. The prefects were expected to collect taxes, to organize the *corvée* for works which, like irrigation, could not be left to personal initiative; and above all to raise regiments and lead them in the royal campaigns. Meanwhile royal spies (or, as we should say, "intelligence officers") kept watch on these prefects and their aides, and informed the king concerning the state of the nation.

All in all, the Assyrian government was primarily an instrument of war. For war was often more profitable than peace; it cemented discipline, intensified patriotism, strengthened the royal power, and brought abundant spoils and slaves for the enrichment and service of the capital. Hence Assyrian history is largely a picture of cities sacked and villages or fields laid waste. When Ashurbanipal suppressed the revolt of his brother, Shamash-shum-ukin, and captured Babylon after a long and bitter siege,

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\* The oldest extant Assyrian laws are ninety articles contained on three tablets found at Ashur and dating ca. 1300 B.C.<sup>31</sup>

the city presented a terrible spectacle, and shocked even the Assyrians. . . . Most of the numerous victims to pestilence or famine lay about the streets or in the public squares, a prey to the dogs and swine; such of the inhabitants and the soldiery as were comparatively strong had endeavored to escape into the country, and only those remained who had not sufficient strength to drag themselves beyond the walls. Ashurbanipal pursued the fugitives, and having captured nearly all of them, vented on them the full fury of his vengeance. He caused the tongues of the soldiers to be torn out, and then had them clubbed to death. He massacred the common folk in front of the great winged bulls which had already witnessed a similar butchery half a century before under his grandfather Sennacherib. The corpses of the victims remained long unburied, a prey to all unclean beasts and birds.<sup>22</sup>

The weakness of Oriental monarchies was bound up with this addiction to violence. Not only did the subject provinces repeatedly revolt, but within the royal palace or family itself violence again and again attempted to upset what violence had established and maintained. At or near the end of almost every reign some disturbance broke out over the succession to the throne; the aging monarch saw conspiracies forming around him, and in several cases he was hastened to his end by murder. The nations of the Near East preferred violent uprisings to corrupt elections, and their form of recall was assassination. Some of these wars were doubtless inevitable: barbarians prowled about every frontier, and one reign of weakness would see the Scythians, the Cimmerians, or some other horde, sweeping down upon the wealth of the Assyrian cities. And perhaps we exaggerate the frequency of war and violence in these Oriental states, through the accident that ancient monuments and modern chroniclers have preserved the dramatic record of battles, and ignored the victories of peace. Historians have been prejudiced in favor of bloodshed; they found it, or thought their readers would find it, more interesting than the quiet achievements of the mind. We think war less frequent today because we are conscious of the lucid intervals of peace, while history seems conscious only of the fevered crises of war.

## III. ASSYRIAN LIFE

*Industry and trade—Marriage and morals—Religion and science—  
Letters and libraries—The Assyrian ideal of a gentleman*

The economic life of Assyria did not differ much from that of Babylonia, for in many ways the two countries were merely the north and south of one civilization. The southern kingdom was more commercial, the northern more agricultural; rich Babylonians were usually merchants, rich Assyrians were most often landed gentry actively supervising great estates, and looking with Roman scorn upon men who made their living by buying cheap and selling dear.<sup>31</sup> Nevertheless the same rivers flooded and nourished the land, the same method of ridges and canals controlled the overflow, the same *shadufs* raised the water from ever deeper beds to fields sown with the same wheat and barley, millet and sesame.\* The same industries supported the life of the towns; the same system of weights and measures governed the exchange of goods; and though Nineveh and her sister capitals were too far north to be great centers of commerce, the wealth brought to them by Assyria's sovereigns filled them with handicrafts and trade. Metal was mined or imported in new abundance, and towards 700 B.C. iron replaced bronze as the basic metal of industry and armament.<sup>32</sup> Metal was cast, glass was blown, textiles were dyed,† earthenware was enameled, and houses were as well equipped in Nineveh as in Europe before the Industrial Revolution.<sup>33</sup> During the reign of Sennacherib an aqueduct was built which brought water to Nineveh from thirty miles away; a thousand feet of it, recently discovered,‡ constitute the oldest aqueduct known. Industry and trade were financed in part by private bankers, who charged 25% for loans. Lead, copper, silver and gold served as currency; and about 700 B.C. Sennacherib minted silver into half-shekel pieces—one of our earliest examples of an official coinage.<sup>34</sup>

The people fell into five classes: patricians or nobles; craftsmen or master-artisans, organized in guilds, and including the professions as well as the trades; the unskilled but free workmen and peasants of town and village; serfs bound to the soil on great estates, in the manner of medieval Europe;

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\* Other products of Assyrian cultivation were olives, grapes, garlic, onions, lettuce, cress, beets, turnips, radishes, cucumbers, alfalfa, and licorice. Meat was rarely eaten by any but the aristocracy;<sup>35</sup> except for fish this war-like nation was largely vegetarian.

† A tablet of Sennacherib, ca. 700 B.C., contains the oldest known reference to cotton: "The tree that bore wool they clipped and shredded for cotton."<sup>36</sup> It was probably imported from India.

‡ By the Iraq Expedition of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago.

and slaves captured in war or attached for debt, compelled to announce their status by pierced ears and shaven head, and performing most of the menial labor everywhere. On a bas-relief of Sennacherib we see supervisors holding the whip over slaves who, in long parallel lines, are drawing a heavy piece of statuary on a wooden sledge.<sup>38</sup>

Like all military states, Assyria encouraged a high birth rate by its moral code and its laws. Abortion was a capital crime; a woman who secured miscarriage, even a woman who died of attempting it, was to be impaled on a stake.<sup>39</sup> Though women rose to considerable power through marriage and intrigue, their position was lower than in Babylonia. Severe penalties were laid upon them for striking their husbands, wives were not allowed to go out in public unveiled, and strict fidelity was exacted of them—though their husbands might have all the concubines they could afford.<sup>40</sup> Prostitution was accepted as inevitable, and was regulated by the state.<sup>40a</sup> The king had a varied harem, whose inmates were condemned to a secluded life of dancing, singing, quarreling, needlework and conspiracy.<sup>41</sup> A cuckolded husband might kill his rival *in flagrante delicto*, and was held to be within his rights; this is a custom that has survived many codes. For the rest the law of matrimony was as in Babylonia, except that marriage was often by simple purchase, and in many cases the wife lived in her father's house, visited occasionally by her husband.<sup>42</sup>

In all departments of Assyrian life we meet with a patriarchal sternness natural to a people that lived by conquest, and in every sense on the border of barbarism. Just as the Romans took thousands of prisoners into lifelong slavery after their victories, and dragged others to the Circus Maximus to be torn to pieces by starving animals, so the Assyrians seemed to find satisfaction—or a necessary tutelage for their sons—in torturing captives, blinding children before the eyes of their parents, flaying men alive, roasting them in kilns, chaining them in cages for the amusement of the populace, and then sending the survivors off to execution.<sup>43</sup> Ashurnasirpal tells how “all the chiefs who had revolted I flayed, with their skins I covered the pillar, some in the midst I walled up, others on stakes I impaled, still others I arranged around the pillar on stakes. . . . As for the chieftains and royal officers who had rebelled, I cut off their members.”<sup>44</sup> Ashurbanipal boasts that “I burned three thousand captives with fire, I left not a single one among them alive to serve as a hostage.”<sup>45</sup> Another of his inscriptions reads: “These warriors who had sinned against

Ashur and had plotted evil against me . . . from their hostile mouths have I torn their tongues, and I have compassed their destruction. As for the others who remained alive, I offered them as a funerary sacrifice; . . . their lacerated members have I given unto the dogs, the swine, the wolves. . . . By accomplishing these deeds I have rejoiced the heart of the great gods."<sup>40</sup> Another monarch instructs his artisans to engrave upon the bricks these claims on the admiration of posterity: "My war chariots crush men and beasts. . . . The monuments which I erect are made of human corpses from which I have cut the head and limbs. I cut off the hands of all those whom I capture alive."<sup>41</sup> Reliefs at Nineveh show men being impaled or flayed, or having their tongues torn out; one shows a king gouging out the eyes of prisoners with a lance while he holds their heads conveniently in place with a cord passed through their lips.<sup>42</sup> As we read such pages we become reconciled to our own mediocrity.

Religion apparently did nothing to mollify this tendency to brutality and violence. It had less influence with the government than in Babylonia, and took its cue from the needs and tastes of the kings. Ashur, the national deity, was a solar god, warlike and merciless to his enemies; his people believed that he took a divine satisfaction in the execution of prisoners before his shrine.<sup>43</sup> The essential function of Assyrian religion was to train the future citizen to a patriotic docility, and to teach him the art of wheedling favors out of the gods by magic and sacrifice. The only religious texts that survive from Assyria are exorcisms and omens. Long lists of omens have come down to us in which the inevitable results of every manner of event are given, and methods of avoiding them are prescribed.<sup>44</sup> The world was pictured as crowded with demons, who had to be warded off by charms suspended about the neck, or by long and careful incantations.

In such an atmosphere the only science that flourished was that of war. Assyrian medicine was merely Babylonian medicine; Assyrian astronomy was merely Babylonian astrology—the stars were studied chiefly with a view to divination.<sup>45</sup> We find no evidence of philosophical speculation, no secular attempt to explain the world. Assyrian philologists made lists of plants, probably for the use of medicine, and thereby contributed moderately to establish botany; other scribes made lists of nearly all the objects they had found under the sun, and their attempts to classify these objects ministered slightly to the natural science of the Greeks. From these lists our language has taken, usually through the Greeks, such words as *hangar*, *gypsum*, *camel*, *plinth*, *shekel*, *rose*, *ammonia*, *jasper*, *cane*, *cherry*, *laudanum*, *naphtha*, *sesame*, *hyssop* and *myrrh*.<sup>46</sup>

The tablets recording the deeds of the kings, though they have the distinction of being at once bloody and dull, must be accorded the honor of being among the oldest extant forms of historiography. They were in the early years mere chronicles, registering royal victories, and admitting of no defeats; they became, in later days, embellished and literary accounts of the important events of the reign. The clearest title of Assyria to a place in a history of civilization was its libraries. That of Ashurbanipal contained 30,000 clay tablets, classified and catalogued, each tablet bearing an easily identifiable tag. Many of them bore the King's book-mark: "Whoso shall carry off this tablet, . . . may Ashur and Belit overthrow him in wrath . . . and destroy his name and posterity from the land."<sup>53</sup> A large number of the tablets are copies of undated older works, of which earlier forms are being constantly discovered; the avowed purpose of Ashurbanipal's library was to preserve the literature of Babylonia from oblivion. But only a small number of the tablets would now be classed as literature; the majority of them are official records, astrological and augural observations, oracles, medical prescriptions and reports, exorcisms, hymns, prayers, and genealogies of the kings and the gods.<sup>54</sup> Among the least dull of the tablets are two in which Ashurbanipal confesses, with quaint insistence, his scandalous delight in books and knowledge:

I, Ashurbanipal, understood the wisdom of Nabu,\* I acquired an understanding of all the arts of tablet-writing. I learnt to shoot the bow, to ride horses and chariots, and to hold the reins. . . . Marduk, the wise one of the gods, presented me with information and understanding as a gift. . . . Enurt and Nergal made me virile and strong, of incomparable force. I understood the craft of the wise Adapa, the hidden secrets of all the scribal art; in heavenly and earthly buildings I read and pondered; in the meetings of clerks I was present; I watched the omens, I explained the heavens with the learned priests, recited the complicated multiplications and divisions that are not immediately apparent. The beautiful writings in Sumerian that are obscure, in Akkadian that are difficult to bear in mind, it was my joy to repeat. . . . I mounted colts, rode them with prudence so that they were not violent; I drew the bow, sped the arrow, the sign of the warrior. I flung the quivering javelins like short lances. . . . I held the reins like a charioteer. . . . I directed

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\* The god of wisdom, corresponding to Thoth, Hermes and Mercury.



the weaving of reed shields and breastplates like a pioneer. I had the learning that all clerks of every kind possess when their time of maturity comes. At the same time I learnt what is proper for lordship, I went my royal ways.<sup>65</sup>

#### IV. ASSYRIAN ART

##### *Minor arts — Bas-relief — Statuary — Building — A page from "Sardanapalus"*

At last, in the field of art, Assyria equaled her preceptor Babylonia, and in bas-relief surpassed her. Stimulated by the influx of wealth into Ashur, Kalakh and Nineveh, artists and artisans began to produce—for nobles and their ladies, for kings and palaces, for priests and temples—jewels of every description, cast metal as skilfully designed and finely wrought as on the great gates at Balawat, and luxurious furniture of richly carved and costly woods strengthened with metal and inlaid with gold, silver, bronze, or precious stones.<sup>66</sup> Pottery was poorly developed, and music, like so much else, was merely imported from Babylon; but *tempera* painting in bright colors under a thin glaze became one of the characteristic arts of Assyria, from which it passed to its perfection in Persia. Painting, as always in the ancient East, was a secondary and dependent art.

In the heyday of Sargon II, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon and Ashurbanipal, and presumably through their lavish patronage, the art of bas-relief created new masterpieces for the British Museum. One of the best examples, however, dates from Ashurnasirpal II; it represents, in chaste alabaster, the good god Marduk overcoming the evil god of chaos, Tiamat.<sup>67</sup> The human figures in Assyrian reliefs are stiff and coarse and all alike, as if some perfect model had insisted on being reproduced forever; all the men have the same massive heads, the same brush of whiskers, the same stout bellies, the same invisible necks; even the gods are these same Assyrians in very slight disguise. Only now and then do the human figures take on vitality, as in the alabaster relief depicting spirits in adoration before a palmetto tree,<sup>68</sup> and the fine limestone stele of Shamsi-Adad VII found at Kalakh.<sup>69</sup> Usually it is the animal reliefs that stir us; never before or since has carving pictured animals so successfully. The panels monotonously repeat scenes of war and the hunt; but the eye never tires of their vigor of action, their flow of motion, and their simple directness

of line. It is as if the artist, forbidden to portray his masters realistically or individually, had given all his lore and skill to the animals; he represents them in a profusion of species—lions, horses, asses, goats, dogs, deer, birds, grasshoppers—and in every attitude except rest; too often he shows them in the agony of death; but even then they are the center and life of his picture and his art. The majestic horses of Sargon II on the reliefs at Khorsabad;<sup>80</sup> the wounded lioness from Sennacherib's palace at Nineveh;<sup>81</sup> the dying lion in alabaster from the palace of Ashurbanipal;<sup>82</sup> the lion-hunts of Ashurnasirpal II and Ashurbanipal;<sup>83</sup> the resting lioness,<sup>84</sup> and the lion released from a trap;<sup>85</sup> the fragment in which a lion and his mate bask in the shade of the trees<sup>86</sup>—these are among the world's choicest masterpieces in this form of art. The representation of natural objects in the reliefs is stylized and crude; the forms are heavy, the outlines are hard, the muscles are exaggerated; and there is no other attempt at perspective than the placing of the distant in the upper half of the picture, on the same scale as the foreground presented below. Gradually, however, the guild of sculptors under Sennacherib learned to offset these defects with a boldly realistic portrayal, a technical finish, and above all a vivid perception of action, which, in the field of animal sculpture, have never been surpassed. Bas-relief was to the Assyrian what sculpture was to the Greek, or painting to the Italians of the Renaissance—a favorite art uniquely expressing the national ideal of form and character.

We cannot say as much for Assyrian sculpture. The carvers of Nineveh and Kalakh seem to have preferred relief to work in the round; very little full sculpture has come down to us from the ruins, and none of it is of a high order. The animals are full of power and majesty, as if conscious of not only physical but moral superiority to man—like the bulls that guarded the gateway at Khorsabad;<sup>87</sup> the human or divine figures are primitively coarse and heavy, adorned but undistinguished, erect but dead. An exception might be made for the massive statue of Ashurnasirpal II now in the British Museum; through all its heavy lines one sees a man every inch a king: royal sceptre firmly grasped, thick lips set with determination, eyes cruel and alert, a bull-like neck boding short shrift for enemies and falsifiers of tax-reports, and two gigantic feet full poised on the back of the world.

We must not take too seriously our judgments of this sculpture; very likely the Assyrians idolized knotted muscles and short necks, and would have looked with martial scorn upon our almost feminine slenderness, or

the smooth, voluptuous grace of Praxiteles' Hermes and the Apollo Belvedere. As for Assyrian architecture, how can we estimate its excellence when nothing remains of it but ruins almost level with the sand, and serving chiefly as a hook upon which brave archeologists may hang their imaginative "restorations"? Like Babylonian and recent American architecture, the Assyrian aimed not at beauty but at grandeur, and sought it by mass design. Following the traditions of Mesopotamian art, Assyrian architecture adopted brick as its basic material, but went its own way by facing it more lavishly with stone. It inherited the arch and the vault from the south, developed them, and made some experiments in columns which led the way to the caryatids and the voluted "Ionic" capitals of the Persians and the Greeks.<sup>79</sup> The palaces squatted over great areas of ground, and were wisely limited to two or three stories in height;<sup>80</sup> ordinarily they were designed as a series of halls and chambers enclosing a quiet and shaded court. The portals of the royal residences were guarded with monstrous stone animals, the entrance hall was lined with historical reliefs and statuary, the floors were paved with alabaster slabs, the walls were hung with costly tapestries, or paneled with precious woods, and bordered with elegant mouldings; the roofs were reinforced with massive beams, sometimes covered with leaf of silver or gold, and the ceilings were often painted with representations of natural scenery.<sup>81</sup>

The six mightiest warriors of Assyria were also its greatest builders. Tiglath-Pileser I rebuilt in stone the temples of Ashur, and left word about one of them that he had "made its interior brilliant like the vault of heaven, decorated its walls like the splendor of the rising stars, and made it superb with shining brightness."<sup>82</sup> The later emperors gave generously to the temples, but, like Solomon, they preferred their palaces. Ashurnasirpal II built at Kalakh an immense edifice of stone-faced brick, ornamented with reliefs praising piety and war. Nearby, at Balawat, Rassam found the ruins of another structure, from which he rescued two bronze gates of magnificent workmanship.<sup>83</sup> Sargon II commemorated himself by raising a spacious palace at Dur-Sharrukin (i.e., Fort Sargon, on the site of the modern Khorsabad); its gateway was flanked by winged bulls, its walls were decorated with reliefs and shining tiles, its vast rooms were equipped with delicately carved furniture, and were adorned with imposing statuary. From every victory Sargon brought more slaves to work on this construction, and more marble, *lapis lazuli*, bronze, silver and gold to beautify it. Around it he set a group of temples, and in the rear

he offered to the god a *ziggurat* of seven stories, topped with silver and gold. Sennacherib raised at Nineveh a royal mansion called "The Incomparable," surpassing in size all other palaces of antiquity;" its walls and floors sparkled with precious metals, woods, and stones; its tiles vied in their brilliance with the luminaries of day and night; the metal-workers cast for it gigantic lions and oxen of copper, and the sculptors carved for it winged bulls of limestone and alabaster, and lined its walls with pastoral symphonies in bas-relief. Esarhaddon continued the rebuilding and enlargement of Nineveh, and excelled all his predecessors in the grandeur of his edifices and the luxuriousness of their equipment; a dozen provinces provided him with materials and men; new ideas for columns and decorations came to him during his sojourn in Egypt; and when at last his palaces and temples were complete they were filled with the artistic booty and conceptions of the whole Near Eastern world."

The worst commentary on Assyrian architecture lies in the fact that within sixty years after Esarhaddon had finished his palace it was crumbling into ruins." Ashurbanipal tells us how he rebuilt it; as we read his inscription the centuries fade, and we see dimly into the heart of the King:

At that time the harem, the resting-place of the palace . . . which Sennacherib, my grandfather, had built for his royal dwelling, had become old with joy and gladness, and its walls had fallen. I, Ashurbanipal, the Great King, the mighty King, the King of the World, the King of Assyria, . . . because I had grown up in that harem, and Ashur, Sin, Shamash, Ramman, Bel, Nabu, Ishtar, . . . Ninib, Nergal and Nusku had preserved me therein as crown prince, and had extended their good protection and shelter of prosperity over me, . . . and had constantly sent me joyful tidings therein of victory over my enemies; and because my dreams on my bed at night were pleasant, and in the morning my fancies were bright, . . . I tore down its ruins; in order to extend its area I tore it all down. I erected a building the site of whose structure was fifty *tibki* in extent. I raised a terrace; but I was afraid before the shrines of the great gods my lords, and did not raise that structure very high. In a good month, on a favorable day, I put in its foundations upon that terrace, and laid its brickwork. I emptied wine of sesame and wine of grapes upon its cellar, and poured them also upon its earthen wall. In order to build that harem the people of

my land hauled its bricks there in wagons of Elam which I had carried away as spoil by the command of the gods. I made the kings of Arabia who had violated their treaty with me, and whom I had captured alive in battle with my own hands, carry baskets and (wear) workmen's caps in order to build that harem. . . . They spent their days in moulding its bricks and performing forced service for it to the playing of music. With joy and rejoicing I built it from its foundations to its roof. I made more room in it than before, and made the work upon it splendid. I laid upon it long beams of cedar, which grew upon Sirara and Lebanon. I covered doors of *liaru*-wood, whose odor is pleasant, with a sheath of copper, and hung them in its doorways. . . . I planted around it a grove of all kinds of trees, and . . . fruits of every kind. I finished the work of its construction, offered splendid sacrifices to the gods my lords, dedicated it with joy and rejoicing, and entered therein under a splendid canopy."<sup>2</sup>

#### V. ASSYRIA PASSES

##### *The last days of a king — Sources of Assyrian decay — The fall of Nineveh*

Nevertheless the "Great King, the mighty King, the King of the World, the King of Assyria" complained in his old age of the misfortunes that had come to his lot. The last tablet bequeathed us by his wedge raises again the questions of Ecclesiastes and Job:

I did well unto god and man, to dead and living. Why have sickness and misery befallen me? I cannot do away with the strife in my country and the dissensions in my family; disturbing scandals oppress me always. Illness of mind and flesh bow me down; with cries of woe I bring my days to an end. On the day of the city god, the day of the festival, I am wretched; death is seizing hold upon me, and bears me down. With lamentation and mourning I wail day and night, I groan, "O God! grant even to one who is impious that he may see thy light!"<sup>3</sup>\*

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\* Diodorus—how reliably we cannot say—pictures the King as rioting away his years in feminine comforts and genderless immorality, and credits him with composing his own reckless epitaph:

Knowing full well that thou wert mortal born,  
Thy heart lift up, take thy delight in feasts;

We do not know how Ashurbanipal died; the story dramatized by Byron—that he set fire to his own palace and perished in the flames—rests on the authority of the marvel-loving Ctesias,<sup>70</sup> and may be merely legend. His death was in any case a symbol and an omen; soon Assyria too was to die, and from causes of which Ashurbanipal had been a part. For the economic vitality of Assyria had been derived too rashly from abroad; it depended upon profitable conquests bringing in riches and trade; at any moment it could be ended with a decisive defeat. Gradually the qualities of body and character that had helped to make the Assyrian armies invincible were weakened by the very victories that they won; in each victory it was the strongest and bravest who died, while the infirm and cautious survived to multiply their kind; it was a dysgenic process that perhaps made for civilization by weeding out the more brutal types, but undermined the biological basis upon which Assyria had risen to power. The extent of her conquests had helped to weaken her; not only had they depopulated her fields to feed insatiate Mars, but they had brought into Assyria, as captives, millions of destitute aliens who bred with the fertility of the hopeless, destroyed all national unity of character and blood, and became by their growing numbers a hostile and disintegrating force in the very midst of the conquerors. More and more the army itself was filled by these men of other lands, while semi-barbarous marauders harassed every border, and exhausted the resources of the country in an endless defense of its unnatural frontiers.

Ashurbanipal died in 626 B.C. Fourteen years later an army of Babylonians under Nabopolassar united with an army of Medes under Cyaxares and a horde of Scythians from the Caucasus, and with amazing ease and swiftness captured the citadels of the north. Nineveh was laid waste as ruthlessly and completely as her kings had once ravaged Susa and Babylon; the city was put to the torch, the population was slaughtered or enslaved, and the palace so recently built by Ashurbanipal was sacked and destroyed. At one blow Assyria disappeared from history. Nothing

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When dead no pleasure more is thine. Thus I,  
Who once o'er mighty Ninus ruled, am naught  
But dust. Yet these are mine which gave me joy  
In life—the food I ate, my wantonness,  
And love's delights. But all those other things  
Men deem felicities are left behind.<sup>71</sup>

Perhaps there is no inconsistency between this mood and that pictured in the text; the one may have been the medical preliminary to the other.

remained of her except certain tactics and weapons of war, certain voluted capitals of semi-"Ionic" columns, and certain methods of provincial administration that passed down to Persia, Macedon and Rome. The Near East remembered her for a while as a merciless unifier of a dozen lesser states; and the Jews recalled Nineveh vengefully as "the bloody city, full of lies and robbery."<sup>80</sup> In a little while all but the mightiest of the Great Kings were forgotten, and all their royal palaces were in ruins under the drifting sands. Two hundred years after its capture, Xenophon's Ten Thousand marched over the mounds that had been Nineveh, and never suspected that these were the site of the ancient metropolis that had ruled half the world. Not a stone remained visible of all the temples with which Assyria's pious warriors had sought to beautify their greatest capital. Even Ashur, the everlasting god, was dead.

## CHAPTER XI

# A Motley of Nations

### I. THE INDO-EUROPEAN PEOPLES

*The ethnic scene—Mitannians—Hittites—Armenians—Scythians—Phrygians—The Divine Mother—Lydians—Cræsus—Coinage—Cræsus, Solon and Cyrus*

TO a distant and yet discerning eye the Near East, in the days of Nebuchadrezzar, would have seemed like an ocean in which vast swarms of human beings moved about in turmoil, forming and dissolving groups, enslaving and being enslaved, eating and being eaten, killing and getting killed, endlessly. Behind and around the great empires—Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria and Persia—flowered this medley of half nomad, half settled tribes: Cimmerians, Cilicians, Cappadocians, Bithynians, Ashkanians, Mysians, Mæonians, Carians, Lycians, Pamphylians, Pisidians, Lycaonians, Philistines, Amorites, Canaanites, Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites and a hundred other peoples each of which felt itself the center of geography and history, and would have marveled at the ignorant prejudice of an historian who would reduce them to a paragraph. Throughout the history of the Near East such nomads were a peril to the more settled kingdoms which they almost surrounded; periodically droughts would fling them upon these richer regions, necessitating frequent wars, and perpetual readiness for war.<sup>1</sup> Usually the nomad tribe survived the settled kingdom, and overran it in the end. The world is dotted with areas where once civilization flourished, and where nomads roam again.

In this seething ethnic sea certain minor states took shape, which, even if only as conductors, contributed their mite to the heritage of the race. The Mitannians interest us not as the early antagonists of Egypt in the Near East, but as one of the first Indo-European peoples known to us in Asia, and as the worshipers of gods—Mithra, Indra and Varuna—whose pas-



sage to Persia and India helps us to trace the movements of what was once so conveniently called the "Aryan" race.\*

The Hittites were among the most powerful and civilized of the early Indo-European peoples. Apparently they had come down across the Bosphorus, the Hellespont, the Ægean or the Caucasus, and had established themselves as a ruling military caste over the indigenous agriculturists of that mountainous peninsula, south of the Black Sea, which we know as Asia Minor. Towards 1800 B.C. we find them settled near the sources of the Tigris and the Euphrates; thence they spread their arms and influence into Syria, and gave mighty Egypt some indignant concern. We have seen how Rameses II was forced to make peace with them, and to acknowledge the Hittite king as his equal. At Boghaz Keui they made their capital and centered their civilization: first on the iron which they mined in the mountains bordering on Armenia, then on a code of laws much influenced by Hammurabi's, and finally on a crude esthetic sense which drove them to carve vast and awkward figures in the round, or upon the living rock.† Their language, recently deciphered by Hronzný from the ten thousand clay tablets found at Boghaz Keui by Hugo Winckler, was largely of Indo-European affinity; its declensional and conjugational forms closely resembled those of Latin and Greek, and some of its simpler words are visibly akin to English.§ The Hittites wrote a pictographic script in their own queer way—one line from left to right, the next from right to left, and so forth alternately. They learned cuneiform from the Babylonians, taught Crete

\* The word *Aryan* first appears in the Harri, one of the tribes of Mitanni. In general it was the self-given appellation of peoples living near, or coming from, the shores of the Caspian Sea. The term is properly applied today chiefly to the Mitannians, Hittites, Medes, Persians, and Vedic Hindus—i.e., only to the *eastern* branch of the Indo-European peoples, whose western branch populated Europe.<sup>2</sup>

† East of the Halys River. Nearby, across the river, is Angora, capital of Turkey, and lineal descendant of Ancyra, the ancient metropolis of Phrygia. We may be helped to a cultural perspective by realizing that the Turks, whom we call "terrible," note with pride the antiquity of their capital, and mourn the domination of Europe by barbaric infidels. Every point is the center of the world.

‡ Baron von Oppenheim unearthed at Tell Halaf and elsewhere many relics of Hittite art, which he has collected into his own museum, an abandoned factory in Berlin. Most of these remains are dated by their finder about 1200 B.C.; some of them he attributes precariously to the fourth millennium B.C. The collection includes a group of lions crudely but powerfully carved in stone, a bull in fine black stone, and figures of the Hittite triad of gods—the Sun-god, the Weather-god, and Hepat, the Hittite Ishtar. One of the most impressive of the figures is an ungainly Sphinx, before which is a stone vessel intended for offerings.

§ Cf., e.g., *vadar*, water; *ezza*, eat; *uga*, I (Latin *ego*); *tug*, thee; *vesh*, we; *mu*, me; *knish*, who (Lat. *quis*); *quit*, what (Lat. *quid*), etc.<sup>3</sup>

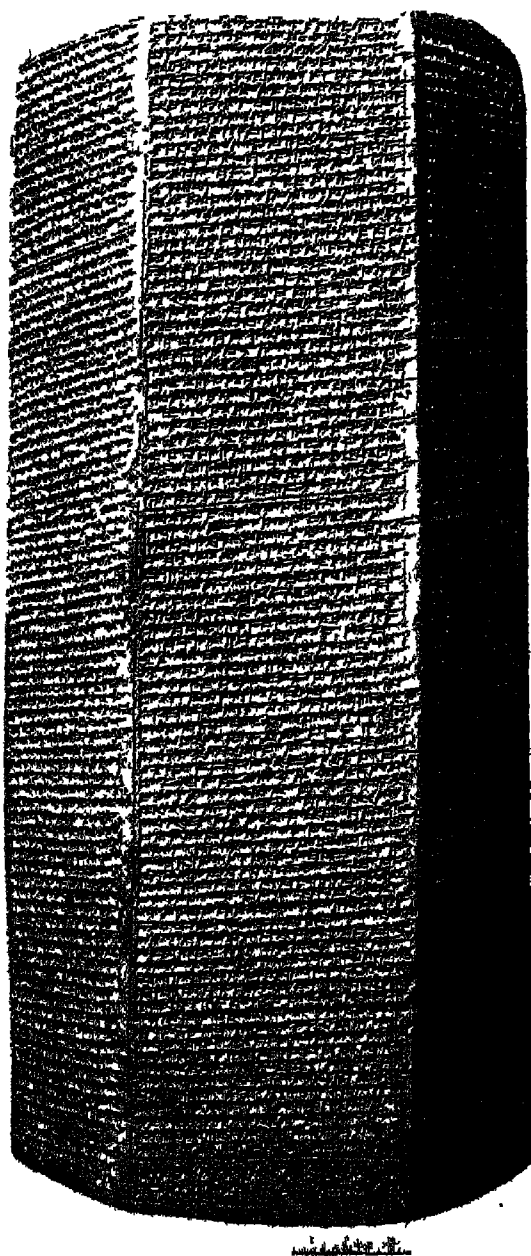


FIG. 30—*The Prism of Sennacherib*  
Iraq Museum; courtesy of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago

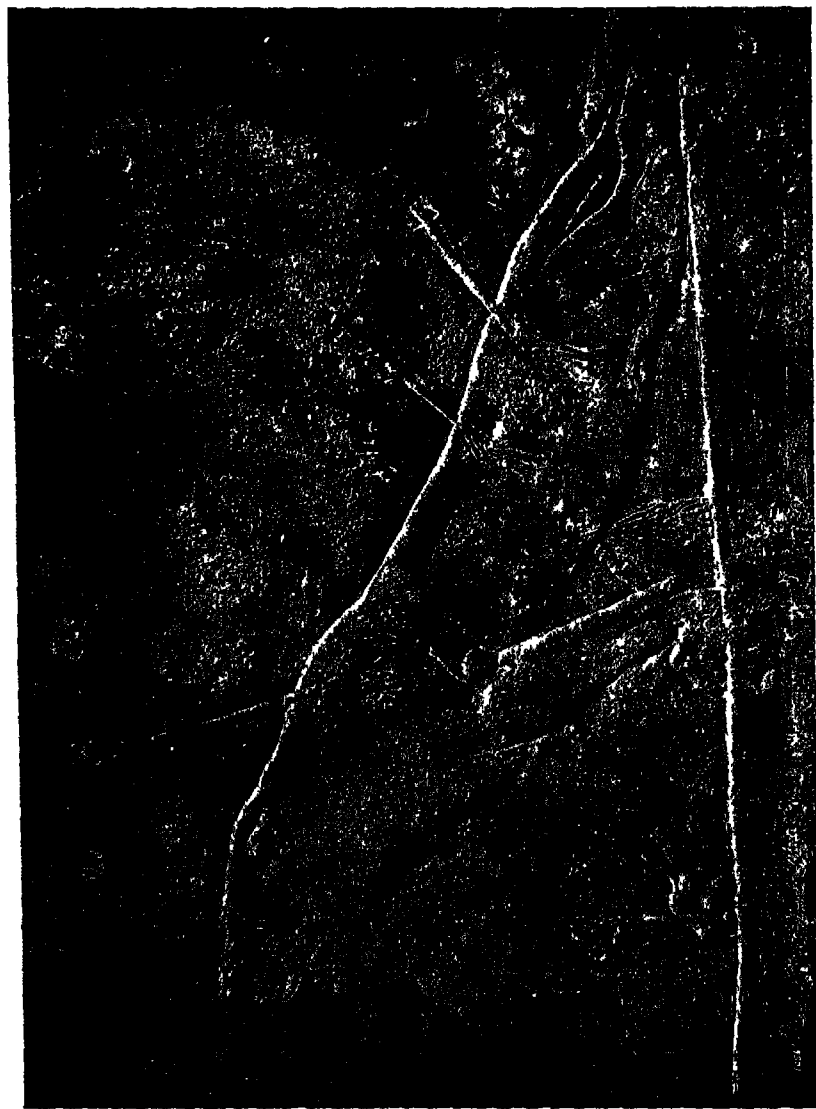


FIG. 31—*The Dying Lioness of Nineveh*  
British Museum; photo by Metropolitan Museum of Art



FIG. 32—*The Lion Hunt; relief on alabaster, from Nineveh*  
British Museum; Metropolitan Museum of Art



FIG. 33—*Assyrian relief of Marduk fighting Tiamat, from Kalakh*  
British Museum; photo copyright by W. A. Mansell, London



FIG. 34—*Winged Bull from the palace of Ashurnasirpal II at Kalakh*  
Metropolitan Museum of Art

the use of the clay tablet for writing, and seem to have mingled with the ancient Hebrews intimately enough to have given them their sharply aquiline nose, so that this Hebraic feature must now be considered strictly "Aryan." Some of the surviving tablets are vocabularies giving Sumerian, Babylonian and Hittite equivalents; others are administrative enactments revealing a close-knit military and monarchical state, others contain two hundred fragments of a code of laws, including price-regulations for commodities.\* The Hittites disappeared from history almost as mysteriously as they entered it; one after another their capitals decayed—perhaps because their great advantage, iron, became equally accessible to their competitors. The last of these capitals, Carchemish, fell before the Assyrians in 717 B.C.

Just north of Assyria was a comparatively stable nation, known to the Assyrians as Urartu, to the Hebrews as Ararat, and to later times as Armenia. For many centuries, beginning before the dawn of recorded history and continuing till the establishment of Persian rule over all of western Asia, the Armenians maintained their independent government, their characteristic customs and arts. Under their greatest king, Argistis II (ca. 708 B.C.), they grew rich by mining iron and selling it to Asia and Greece; they achieved a high level of prosperity and comfort, of culture and manners; they built great edifices of stone, and made excellent vases and statuettes. They lost their wealth in costly wars of offense and defense against Assyria, and passed under Persian domination in the days of the all-conquering Cyrus.

Still farther north, along the shores of the Black Sea, wandered the Scythians, a horde of warriors half Mongol and half European, ferocious bearded giants who lived in wagons, kept their women in *purdah* seclusion,<sup>a</sup> rode bareback on wild horses, fought to live and lived to fight, drank the blood of their enemies and used the scalps as napkins,<sup>b</sup> weakened Assyria with repeated raids, swept through western Asia (ca. 630-610 B.C.), destroying and killing everything and everyone in their path, advanced to the very cities of the Egyptian Delta, were suddenly decimated by a mysterious disease, and were finally overcome by the Medes and driven back to their northern haunts.<sup>c</sup> We catch from such a story another glimpse of the barbaric hinterland that hedged in every ancient state.

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\* Hippocrates tells us that "their women, so long as they are virgins, ride, shoot, throw the javelin while mounted, and fight with their enemies. They do not lay aside their virginity until they have killed three of their enemies. . . . A woman who takes to herself a husband no longer rides, unless she is compelled to do so by a general expedition. They have no right breast; for while they are yet babies their mothers make red-hot a bronze instrument constructed for this very purpose and apply it to the right breast and cauterize it, so that its growth is arrested, and all its strength and bulk are diverted to the right shoulder and right arm."<sup>9</sup>

Towards the end of the ninth century B.C. a new power arose in Asia Minor, inheriting the remains of the Hittite civilization, and serving as a cultural bridge to Lydia and Greece. The legend by which the Phrygians tried to explain for curious historians the foundation of their kingdom was symbolical of the rise and fall of nations. Their first king, Gordios, was a simple peasant whose sole inheritance had been a pair of oxen;\* their next king, his son Midas, was a spendthrift who weakened the state by that greed and extravagance which posterity represented through the legend of his plea to the gods that he might turn anything to gold by touching it. The plea was so well heard that everything Midas touched turned to gold, even the food that he put to his lips; he was on the verge of starvation when the gods allowed him to cleanse himself of the curse by bathing in the river Pactolus—which has given up grains of gold ever since.

The Phrygians made their way into Asia from Europe, built a capital at Ancyra, and for a time contended with Assyria and Egypt for mastery of the Near East. They adopted a native mother-goddess, Ma, rechristened her Cybele from the mountains (*kybela*) in which she dwelt, and worshiped her as the great spirit of the untilled earth, the personification of all the reproductive energies of nature. They took over from the aborigines the custom of serving the goddess through sacred prostitution, and accepted into their mythical lore the story of how Cybele had fallen in love with the young god Atys,† and had compelled him to emasculate himself in her honor; hence the priests of the Great Mother sacrificed their manhood to her upon entering the service of her temples.<sup>12</sup> These barbarous legends fascinated the imagination of the Greeks, and entered profoundly into their mythology and their literature. The Romans officially adopted Cybele into their religion, and some of the orgiastic rites that marked the Roman carnivals were derived from the wild rituals with which the Phrygians annually celebrated the death and resurrection of the handsome Atys.<sup>13</sup>

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\* The oracle of Zeus had commanded the Phrygians to choose as king the first man who rode up to the temple in a wagon; hence the selection of Gordios. The new king dedicated his car to the god; and a new oracle predicted that the man who should succeed in untying the intricate bark knot that bound the yoke of the wagon to the pole would rule over all Asia. Alexander, story goes, cut the "Gordian knot" with a blow of his sword.

† Atys, we are informed, was miraculously born of the virgin-goddess Nana, who conceived him by placing a pomegranate between her breasts.<sup>10</sup>

The ascendancy of Phrygia in Asia Minor was ended with the rise of the new kingdom of Lydia. King Gyges established it with its capital at Sardis; Alyattes, in a long reign of forty-nine years, raised it to prosperity and power; Croesus (570-546 B.C.) inherited and enjoyed it, expanded it by conquest to include nearly all of Asia Minor, and then surrendered it to Persia. By generous bribes to local politicians he brought one after another of the petty states that surrounded him into subjection to Lydia, and by pious and unprecedented hecatombs to local deities he placated these subject peoples and persuaded them that he was the darling of their gods. Croesus further distinguished himself by issuing gold and silver coins of admirable design, minted and guaranteed at their face value by the state; and though these were not, as long supposed, the first official coins in history, much less the invention of coinage,\* nevertheless they set an example that stimulated trade throughout the Mediterranean world. Men had for many centuries used various metals as standards of value and exchange; but these, whether copper, bronze, iron, silver or gold, had in most countries been measured by weight or other tests at each transaction. It was no small improvement that replaced such cumbersome tokens with a national currency; by accelerating the passage of goods from those that could best produce them to those that most effectively demanded them it added to the wealth of the world, and prepared for mercantile civilizations like those of Ionia and Greece, in which the proceeds of commerce were to finance the achievements of literature and art.

Of Lydian literature nothing remains; nor does any specimen survive of the precious wrought vases of gold, iron and silver that Croesus offered to the conquered gods. The vases found in Lydian tombs, and now housed in the Louvre, show how the artistic leadership of Egypt and Babylonia was yielding, in the Lydia of Croesus' day, to the growing influence of Greece; their delicacy of execution rivals their fidelity to nature. When Herodotus visited Lydia he found its customs almost indistinguishable from those of his fellow-Greeks; all that remained to separate them, he tells us, was the way in which the daughters of the common people earned their dowries—by prostitution.<sup>13</sup>

The same great gossip is our chief authority for the dramatic story of Croesus's fall. Herodotus recounts how Croesus displayed his riches

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\* Older coins have been found at Mohenjo-daro, in India (2900 B.C.); and we have seen how Sennacherib (ca. 700 B.C.) minted half-shekel pieces.



to Solon, and then asked him whom he considered the happiest of men. Solon, after naming three individuals who were all dead, refused to call Croesus happy, on the ground that there was no telling what misfortunes the morrow would bring him. Croesus dismissed the great legislator as a fool, turned his hand to plotting against Persia, and suddenly found the hosts of Cyrus at his gates. According to the same historian the Persians won through the superior stench of their camels, which the horses of the Lydian cavalry could not bear; the horses fled, the Lydians were routed, and Sardis fell. Croesus, according to ancient tradition, prepared a great funeral pyre, took his place on it with his wives, his daughters, and the noblest young men among the surviving citizens, and ordered his eunuchs to burn himself and them to death. In his last moments he remembered the words of Solon, mourned his own blindness, and reproached the gods who had taken all his hecatombs and paid him with destruction. Cyrus, if we may follow Herodotus,<sup>1</sup> took pity on him, ordered the flames to be extinguished, carried Croesus with him to Persia, and made him one of his most trusted counsellors.

## II. THE SEMITIC PEOPLES

*The antiquity of the Arabs—Phœnicians—Their world trade—  
Their circumnavigation of Africa—Colonies—Tyre and  
Sidon—Deities—The dissemination of the alphabet—  
Syria—Astarte—The death and resurrection of  
Adoni—The sacrifice of children*

If we attempt to mitigate the confusion of tongues in the Near East by distinguishing the northern peoples of the region as mostly Indo-European, and the central and southern peoples, from Assyria to Arabia, as Semitic,\* we shall have to remember that reality is never so clear-cut in its differences as the rubrics under which we dismember it for neat handling. The Near East was divided by mountains and deserts into localities naturally isolated and therefore naturally diverse in language and traditions; but not only did trade tend to assimilate language, customs and arts along its main routes (as, for example, along the great rivers from Nineveh and Carchemish to the Persian Gulf), but the migrations and imperial deportations of vast communities so mingled stocks and speech

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\* The term *Semite* is derived from Shem, legendary son of Noah, on the theory that Shem was the ancestor of all the Semitic peoples.

that a certain homogeneity of culture accompanied the heterogeneity of blood. By "Indo-European," then, we shall mean *predominantly* Indo-European; by "Semitic" we shall mean *predominantly* Semitic: no strain was unmixed, no culture was left uninfluenced by its neighbors or its enemies. We are to vision the vast area as a scene of ethnic diversity and flux, in which now the Indo-European, now the Semitic, stock for a time prevailed, but only to take on the general cultural character of the whole. Hammurabi and Darius I were separated by differences of blood and religion, and by almost as many centuries as those that divide us from Christ; nevertheless, when we examine the two great kings we perceive that they are essentially and profoundly akin.

The fount and breeding-place of the Semites was Arabia. Out of that arid region, where the "man-plant" grows so vigorously and hardly any other plant will grow at all, came, in a succession of migrations, wave after wave of sturdy, reckless stoics no longer supportable by desert and oases, and bound to conquer for themselves a place in the shade. Those who remained behind created the civilization of Arabia and the Bedouin: the patriarchal family, the stern morality of obedience, the fatalism of a hard environment, and the ignorant courage to kill their own daughters as offerings to the gods. Nevertheless they did not take religion very much to heart till Mohammed came, and they neglected the arts and refinements of life as effeminate devices for degenerate men. For a time they controlled the trade with the further East: their ports at Canneh and Aden were heaped with the riches of the Indies, and their patient caravans carried these goods precariously overland to Phœnicia and Babylon. In the interior of their broad peninsula they built cities, palaces and temples, but they did not encourage foreigners to come and see them. For thousands of years they have lived their own life, kept their own customs, kept their own counsel; they are the same today as in the time of Cheops and Gudea; they have seen a hundred kingdoms rise and fall about them; and their soil is still jealously theirs, guarded from profane feet and alien eyes.

Who, now, were those Phœnicians who have so often been spoken of in these pages, whose ships sailed every sea, whose merchants bargained in every port? The historian is abashed before any question of origins: he must confess that he knows next to nothing about either the early or the late history of this ubiquitous, yet elusive, people.<sup>28</sup> We do not know whence they came, nor when; we are not certain that they

were Semites;\* and as to the date of their arrival on the Mediterranean coast, we cannot contradict the statement of the scholars of Tyre, who told Herodotus that their ancestors had come from the Persian Gulf, and had founded the city in what we should call the twenty-eighth century before Christ." Even their name is problematical: the *phoinix* from which the Greeks coined it may mean the red dye that Tyrian merchants sold, or a palm-tree that flourishes along the Phœnician coast. That coast, a narrow strip a hundred miles long and only ten miles wide, between Syria and the sea, was almost all of Phœnicia; the people never thought it worth while to settle in the Lebanon hills behind them, or to bring these ranges under their rule; they were content that this beneficent barrier should protect them from the more warlike nations whose goods they carried out into all the lanes of the sea.

Those mountains compelled them to live on the water. From the Sixth Egyptian Dynasty onward they were the busiest merchants of the ancient world; and when they liberated themselves from Egypt (ca. 1200 B.C.) they became masters of the Mediterranean. They themselves manufactured various forms and objects of glass and metal; they made enameled vases, weapons, ornaments and jewelry; they had a monopoly of the purple dye which they extracted from the molluscs abounding along their shores;" and the women of Tyre were famous for the gorgeous colors with which they stained the products of their deft needlework. These, and the exportable surplus of India and the Near East—cereals, wines, textiles and precious stones—they shipped to every city of the Mediterranean far and near, bringing back, in return, lead, gold and iron from the south shores of the Black Sea, copper, cypress and corn from Cyprus,† ivory from Africa, silver from Spain, tin from Britain, and slaves from everywhere. They were shrewd traders; they persuaded the natives of Spain to give them, in exchange for a cargo of oil, so great a quantity of silver that the holds of their ships could not contain it—whereupon the subtle Semites replaced the iron or stones in their anchors with silver, and sailed prosperously away."‡ Not satisfied with this, they enslaved the natives, and made them work for long hours in the mines for a subsistence wage.‡ Like all early voyagers, and some old languages, they made scant

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\* Autran has argued that they were a branch of the Cretan civilization."<sup>4</sup>

† Copper and cypress took their names from Cyprus.

‡ Cf. Gibbon: "Spain, by a very singular fatality, was the Peru and Mexico of the old world. The discovery of the rich western continent by the Phœnicians, and the oppres-

distinction between trade and treachery, commerce and robbery; they stole from the weak, cheated the stupid, and were honest with the rest. Sometimes they captured ships on the high seas, and confiscated their cargoes and their crews; sometimes they lured curious natives into visiting the Phœnician vessels, and then sailed off with them to sell them as slaves.<sup>21</sup> They had much to do with giving the trading Semites of antiquity an evil reputation, especially with the early Greeks, who did the same things.\*

Their low and narrow galleys, some seventy feet long, set a new style of design by abandoning the inward-curving bow of the Egyptian vessel, and turning it outward into a sharp point for cleaving wind or water, or the ships of the enemy. One large rectangular sail, hoisted on a mast fixed in the keel, helped the galley-slaves who provided most of the motive-power with their double bank of oars. On a deck above the rowers, soldiers stood on guard, ready for trade or war. These frail ships, having no compasses and drawing hardly five feet of water, kept cautiously near the shore, and for a long time dared not move during the night. Gradually the art of navigation developed to the point where the Phœnician pilots, guiding themselves by the North Star (or the Phœnician Star, as the Greeks called it), ventured into the oceans, and at last circumnavigated Africa, sailing down the east coast first, and "discovering" the Cape of Good Hope some two thousand years before Vasco da Gama. "When autumn came," says Herodotus, "they went ashore, sowed the land, and waited for harvest; then, having reaped the corn, they put to sea again. When two years had thus passed, in the third, having doubled the Pillars of Hercules (Gibraltar), they arrived in Egypt."<sup>22</sup> What an adventure!

At strategic points along the Mediterranean they established garrisons that grew in time into populous colonies or cities: at Cadiz, Carthage and Marseilles, in Malta, Sicily, Sardinia and Corsica, even in distant England. They occupied Cyprus, Melos and Rhodes.<sup>23</sup> They took the arts and sciences of Egypt, Crete and the Near East and spread them in Greece, Africa, Italy and Spain. They bound together the East and

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sion of the simple natives, who were compelled to labor in their own mines for the benefit of the strangers, form an exact type of the more recent history of Spanish America."<sup>20</sup>

\* The Greeks, who for half a millennium were raiders and pirates, gave the name "Phœnician" to anyone addicted to sharp practices.<sup>22</sup>

the West in a commercial and cultural web, and began to redeem Europe from barbarism.

Nourished by this trade, and skilfully governed by mercantile aristocracies too clever in diplomacy and finance to waste their fortunes in war, the cities of Phœnicia rose to a place among the richest and most powerful in the world. Byblos thought itself the oldest of all cities; the god El had founded it at the beginning of time, and to the end of its history it remained the religious capital of Phœnicia. Because papyrus was one of the principal articles in its trade, the Greeks took the name of the city as their word for book—*biblos*—and from their word for books named our Bible—*ta biblia*.

Some fifty miles to the south, also on the coast, lay Sidon; originally a fortress, it grew rapidly into a village, a town, a prosperous city; it contributed the best ships to Xerxes' fleet; and when later the Persians besieged and captured it, its proud leaders deliberately burned it to the ground, forty thousand inhabitants perishing in the conflagration.<sup>26</sup> It was already rebuilt and flourishing when Alexander came, and some of its enterprising merchants followed his army to India "for trafficking."<sup>27</sup>

Greatest of the Phœnician cities was Tyre—i.e., the rock—built upon an island several miles off the coast. It, too, began as a fortress; but its splendid harbor and its security from attack soon made it the metropolis of Phœnicia, a cosmopolitan bedlam of merchants and slaves from the whole Mediterranean world. Already in the ninth century B.C., Tyre had achieved affluence under King Hiram, friend of King Solomon; and by the time of Zechariah (ca. 520 B.C.), she had "heaped up silver as the dust, and fine gold as the mire of the streets."<sup>28</sup> "The houses here," said Strabo, "have many stories, even more than the houses at Rome."<sup>29</sup> Its wealth and courage kept it independent until Alexander came. The young god saw in it a challenge to his omnipotence, and reduced it by building a causeway that turned the island into a peninsula. The success of Alexandria completed the ruin of Tyre.

Like every nation that feels the complexity of cosmic currents and the variety of human needs, Phœnicia had many gods. Each city had its Baal (i.e., Lord) or city-god, who was conceived as ancestor of the kings, and source of the soil's fertility; the corn, the wine, the figs and the flax were all the work of the holy Baal. The Baal of Tyre was called Melkarth; like Hercules, with whom the Greeks identified him, he was a god of strength, and accomplished feats worthy of a Münchhausen. Astarte was the Greek name of the Phœnician Ishtar; she had the distinction of being worshiped in

some places as the goddess of a cold Artemisian chastity, and in others as the amorous and wanton deity of physical love, in which form she was identified by the Greeks with Aphrodite. As Ishtar-Mylitta received in sacrifice the virginity of her girl-devotees at Babylon, so the women who honored Astarte at Byblos had to give up their long tresses to her, or surrender themselves to the first stranger who solicited their love in the precincts of the temple. And as Ishtar had loved Tammuz, so Astarte had loved Adoni (i.e., Lord), whose death on the tusks of a boar was annually mourned at Byblos and Paphos (in Cyprus) with wailing and beating of the breast. Luckily Adoni rose from the dead as often as he died, and ascended to heaven in the presence of his worshipers.<sup>80</sup> Finally there was Moloch (i.e., King), the terrible god to whom the Phœnicians offered living children as burnt sacrifices; at Carthage, during a siege of the city (307 B.C.), two hundred boys of the best families were burned to death on the altar of this fiery divinity.<sup>81</sup>

Nevertheless the Phœnicians deserve some niche in the hall of civilized nations, for it was probably their merchants who taught the Egyptian alphabet to the nations of antiquity. Not the ecstasies of literature but the needs of commerce brought unity to the peoples of the Mediterranean; nothing could better illustrate a certain generative relation between commerce and culture. We do not know that the Phœnicians introduced this alphabet into Greece, though Greek tradition unanimously affirms it;<sup>82</sup> it is possible that Crete gave the alphabet to both the Phœnicians and the Greeks.<sup>83</sup> But it is more probable that the Phœnicians took letters where they took papyrus. About 1100 B.C. we find them importing papyrus from Egypt;<sup>84</sup> for a nation that kept and carried many accounts it was an inestimable convenience compared with the heavy clay tablets of Mesopotamia; and the Egyptian alphabet was likewise an immense improvement upon the clumsy syllabaries of the Near East. About 960 B.C. King Hiram of Tyre dedicated to one of his gods a bronze cup engraved with an alphabetic inscription;<sup>85</sup> and about 840 B.C. King Mesha of Moab announced his glory (on a stone now in the Louvre) in a Semitic dialect written from right to left in letters corresponding to those of the Phœnician alphabet. The Greeks reversed the facing of some of the letters, because they wrote from left to right; but essentially their alphabet was that which the Phœnicians had taught them, and which they were in turn to teach to Europe. These strange symbols are the most precious portion of our cultural heritage.

The oldest examples of alphabetic writing known to us, however, appear not in Phœnicia but in Sinai. At Serabit-el-khadim, a little hamlet covering a site where anciently the Egyptians mined turquoise, Sir William Flinders Petrie found inscriptions in a strange language, dating back to an uncertain age, perhaps as early as 2500 B.C. Though these inscriptions have never been deciphered, it is apparent that they were written not in hieroglyphics, nor in syllabic cuneiform, but with an alphabet.<sup>7</sup> At Zapouna, in southern Syria, French archeologists discovered an entire library of clay tablets—some in hieroglyphic, some in a Semitic alphabetic script. As Zapouna seems to have been permanently destroyed about 1200 B.C., these tablets go back presumably to the thirteenth century B.C.,<sup>8</sup> and suggest to us again how old civilization was in those centuries to which our ignorance ascribes its origins.

Syria lay behind Phœnicia, in the very lap of the Lebanon hills, gathering its tribes together loosely under the rule of that capital which still boasts that it is the oldest city of all, and still harbors Syrians hungry for liberty. For a time the kings of Damascus dominated a dozen petty nations about them, and successfully resisted the efforts of Assyria to make Syria one of her vassal states. The inhabitants of the city were Semitic merchants, who managed to garner wealth out of the caravan trade that passed through Syria's mountains and plains. Artisans and slaves worked for them, none too happily. We hear of masons organizing great unions, and inscriptions tell of a strike of bakers in Magnesia; across the centuries we sense the strife and busyness of an ancient Syrian town.<sup>9</sup> These artisans were skilful in shaping graceful pottery, in carving ivory and wood, in polishing gems, and in weaving stuffs of gay colors for the adornment of their women.<sup>10</sup>

Fashions, manners and morals in Damascus were very much as at Babylon, which was the Paris and *arbiter elegantiarum* of the ancient East. Religious prostitution flourished, for in Syria, as throughout western Asia, the fertility of the soil was symbolized in a Great Mother, or Goddess, whose sexual commerce with her lover gave the hint to all the reproductive processes and energies of nature; and the sacrifice of virginity at the temples was not only an offering to Astarte, but a participation with her in that annual self-abandonment which, it was hoped, would offer an irresistible suggestion to the earth, and insure the increase of plants, animals and men.<sup>11</sup> About the time of the vernal equinox the festival of the Syrian Astarte, like that of Cybele in Phrygia, was cele-

brated at Hierapolis with a fervor bordering upon madness. The noise of flutes and drums mingled with the wailing of the women for Astarte's dead lord, Adoni; eunuch priests danced wildly, and slashed themselves with knives; at last many men, who had come merely as spectators, were overcome with the excitement, threw off their clothing, and emasculated themselves in pledge of lifelong service to the goddess. Then, in the dark of the night, the priests brought a mystic illumination to the scene, opened the tomb of the young god, and announced triumphantly that Adoni, the Lord, had risen from the dead. Touching the lips of the worshipers with balm, the priests whispered to them the promise that they, too, would some day rise from the grave.<sup>40</sup>

The other gods of Syria were not less bloodthirsty than Astarte. It is true that the priests recognized a general divinity, embracing all the gods, and called El or Ilu, like the Elohim of the Jews; but this calm abstraction was hardly noticed by the people who gave their worship to the Baal. Usually they identified this city-god with the sun, as they identified Astarte with the moon; and on occasions of great moment they offered him their own children in sacrifice, after the manner of the Phoenicians; the parents came to the ceremony dressed as for a festival, and the cries of their children burning in the lap of the god were drowned by the blaring of trumpets and the piping of flutes. Normally, however, a milder sacrifice sufficed; the priests slashed themselves until the altar was covered with their blood; or the child's foreskin was offered as a commutation for his life; or the priests condescended to accept a sum of money to be presented to the god in place of the prepuce. In some way the god had to be appeased and satisfied; for his worshipers had made him in the image and dream of themselves, and he had no great regard for human life, or womanly tears.<sup>41</sup>

Similar customs, varying only in name and detail, were practised by the Semitic tribes south of Syria, who filled the land with their confusion of tongues. It was forbidden the Jews to "make their children pass through the fire," but occasionally they did it none the less.<sup>42</sup> Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac, and Agamemnon sacrificing Iphigenia, were but resorting to an ancient rite in attempting to propitiate the gods with human blood. Mesha, King of Moab, sacrificed his eldest son by fire as a means of raising a siege; his prayer having been answered, and the sacrifice of his son having been accepted, he slaughtered seven thousand Israelites in gratitude.<sup>43</sup> Throughout this region, from the Sumerian days



when the Amorites roamed the plains of Amurru (ca. 2800 B.C.) to the time when the Jews fell with divine wrath upon the Canaanites, and Sargon of Assyria captured Samaria, and Nebuchadrezzar captured Jerusalem (597 B.C.), the valley of the Jordan was drenched periodically with fratricidal blood, and many Lords of Hosts rejoiced. These Moabites, Canaanites, Amorites, Edomites, Philistines and Aramæans hardly enter into the cultural record of mankind. It is true that the fertile Aramæans, spreading everywhere, made their language the *lingua franca* of the Near East, and that the alphabetic script which they had learned either from the Egyptians or the Phœnicians replaced the cuneiform and syllabaries of Mesopotamia, first as a mercantile, then as a literary, medium, and became at last the tongue of Christ and the alphabet of the Arabs today." But time preserves their names not so much because of their own accomplishments as because they played some part on the tragic stage of Palestine. We must study, in greater detail than their neighbors, these numerically and geographically insignificant Jews, who gave to the world one of its greatest literatures, two of its most influential religions, and so many of its profoundest men.

## CHAPTER XII

# Judea

### I. THE PROMISED LAND

*Palestine — Climate — Prehistory — Abraham's people — The Jews in Egypt — The Exodus — The conquest of Canaan*

A BUCKLE or a Montesquieu, eager to interpret history through geography, might have taken a handsome leaf out of Palestine. One hundred and fifty miles from Dan on the north to Beersheba on the south, twenty-five to eighty miles from the Philistines on the west to the Syrians, Aramæans, Ammonites, Moabites and Edomites on the east—one would not expect so tiny a territory to play a major rôle in history, or to leave behind it an influence greater than that of Babylonia, Assyria or Persia, perhaps greater even than that of Egypt or Greece. But it was the fortune and misfortune of Palestine that it lay midway between the capitals of the Nile and those of the Tigris and Euphrates. This circumstance brought trade to Judea, and it brought war; time and again the harassed Hebrews were compelled to take sides in the struggle of the empires, to pay tribute or be overrun. Behind the Bible, behind the plaintive cries of the psalmists and the prophets for help from the sky, lay this imperiled place of the Jews between the upper and nether millstones of Mesopotamia and Egypt.

The climatic history of the land tells us again how precarious a thing civilization is, and how its great enemies—barbarism and desiccation—are always waiting to destroy it. Once Palestine was “a land flowing with milk and honey,” as many a passage in the Pentateuch describes it.<sup>1</sup> Josephus, in the first century after Christ, still speaks of it as “moist enough for agriculture, and very beautiful. They have abundance of trees, and are full of autumn fruits both wild and cultivated. . . . They are not naturally watered by many rivers, but derive their chief moisture from rain, of which they have no want.”<sup>2</sup> In ancient days the spring rains that fed the land were stored in cisterns or brought back to the surface by a multitude of wells, and distributed over the country by a network

of canals; this was the physical basis of Jewish civilization. The soil, so nourished, produced barley, wheat and corn, the vine thrived on it, and trees bore olives, figs, dates or other fruits on every slope. When war came and devastated these artificially fertile fields, or when some conqueror exiled to distant regions the families that had cared for them, the desert crept in eagerly, and in a few years undid the work of generations. We cannot judge the fruitfulness of ancient Palestine from the barren wastes and timid oases that confronted the brave Jews who in our own time returned to their old home after eighteen centuries of exile, dispersion and suffering.

History is older in Palestine than Bishop Ussher supposed. Neanderthal remains have been unearthed near the Sea of Galilee, and five Neanderthal skeletons were recently discovered in a cave near Haifa; it appears likely that the Mousterian culture which flourished in Europe about 40,000 B.C. extended to Palestine. At Jericho neolithic floors and hearths have been exhumed that carry back the history of the region down to a Middle Bronze Age (2000-1600 B.C.), in which the towns of Palestine and Syria had accumulated such wealth as to invite conquest by Egypt. In the fifteenth century before Christ Jericho was a well-walled city, ruled by kings acknowledging the suzerainty of Egypt; the tombs of these kings, excavated by the Garstang Expedition, contained hundreds of vases, funerary offerings, and other objects indicating a settled life at Jericho in the time of the Hyksos domination, and a fairly developed civilization in the days of Hatshepsut and Thutmose III.<sup>3</sup> It becomes apparent that the different dates at which we begin the history of divers peoples are merely the marks of our ignorance. The Tell-el-Amarna letters carry on the general picture of Palestinian and Syrian life almost to the entrance of the Jews into the valley of the Nile. It is probable, though not certain, that the "Habiru" spoken of in this correspondence were Hebrews.\*

The Jews believed that the people of Abraham had come from Ur in Sumeria,<sup>4</sup> and had settled in Palestine (ca. 2200 B.C.) a thousand years

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\* The discoveries here summarized have restored considerable credit to those chapters of Genesis that record the early traditions of the Jews. In its outlines, and barring supernatural incidents, the story of the Jews as unfolded in the Old Testament has stood the test of criticism and archeology; every year adds corroboration from documents, monuments, or excavations. E.g., potsherds unearthed at Tel Ad-Duweir in 1935 bore Hebrew inscriptions confirming part of the narrative of the Books of Kings.<sup>4</sup> We must accept the Biblical account provisionally until it is disproved. Cf. Petrie, *Egypt and Israel*, London, 1925, p. 108.

or more before Moses; and that the conquest of the Canaanites was merely a capture by the Hebrews of the land promised them by their God. The Amraphael mentioned in Genesis (xiv, 1) as "King of Shinar in those days" was probably Amarpal, father of Hammurabi, and his predecessor on the throne of Babylon.<sup>9</sup> There are no direct references in contemporary sources to either the Exodus or the conquest of Canaan;<sup>7</sup> and the only indirect reference is the stele erected by Pharaoh Merneptah (ca. 1225 B.C.), part of which reads as follows:

The kings are overthrown, saying "Salam!" . . .  
 Wasted is Tehenu,  
 The Hittite land is pacified,  
 Plundered is Canaan, with every evil, . . .  
 Israel is desolated, her seed is not;  
 Palestine has become a widow for Egypt,  
 All lands are united, they are pacified;  
 Every one that is turbulent is bound by King Merneptah.<sup>8</sup>

This does not prove that Merneptah was the Pharaoh of the Exodus; it proves little except that Egyptian armies had again ravaged Palestine. We cannot tell when the Jews entered Egypt, nor whether they came to it as freemen or as slaves.\* We may take it as likely that the immigrants were at first a modest number,<sup>11</sup> and that the many thousands of Jews in Egypt in Moses' time were the consequence of a high birth rate; as in all periods, "the more they afflicted them, the more they multiplied and grew."<sup>12</sup> The story of the "bondage" in Egypt, of the use of the Jews as slaves in great construction enterprises, their rebellion and escape—or emigration—to Asia, has many internal signs of essential truth, mingled, of course, with supernatural interpolations customary in all the historical writing of the ancient East. Even the story of Moses must not be rejected offhand; it is astonishing, however, that no mention is made of him by either Amos or Isaiah, whose preaching appears to have preceded by a century the composition of the Pentateuch.<sup>†</sup>

\* Perhaps they followed in the track of the Hyksos, whose Semitic rule in Egypt might have offered them some protection.<sup>9</sup> Petrie, accepting the Bible figure of four hundred and thirty years for the stay of the Jews in Egypt, dates their arrival about 1650 B.C., their exit about 1220 B.C.<sup>10</sup>

† Manetho, an Egyptian historian of the third century B.C., as reported by Josephus, tells us that the Exodus was due to the desire of the Egyptians to protect themselves from a plague that had broken out among the destitute and enslaved Jews, and that Moses was an Egyptian priest who went as a missionary among the Jewish "lepers," and gave

When Moses led the Jews to Mt. Sinai he was merely following the route laid down by Egyptian turquoise-hunting expeditions for a thousand years before him. The account of the forty years' wandering in the desert, once looked upon as incredible, now seems reasonable enough in a traditionally nomadic people; and the conquest of Canaan was but one more instance of a hungry nomad horde falling upon a settled community. The conquerors killed as many as they could, and married the rest. Slaughter was unconfined, and (to follow the text) was divinely ordained and enjoyed;<sup>19</sup> Gideon, in capturing two cities, slew 120,000 men; only in the annals of the Assyrians do we meet again with such hearty killing, or easy counting. Occasionally, we are told, "the land rested from war."<sup>20</sup> Moses had been a patient statesman, but Joshua was only a plain, blunt warrior; Moses had ruled bloodlessly by inventing interviews with God, but Joshua ruled by the second law of nature—that the superior killer survives. In this realistic and unsentimental fashion the Jews took their Promised Land.

## II. SOLOMON IN ALL HIS GLORY

*Race — Appearance — Language — Organization — Judges and kings—Saul—David—Solomon—His wealth—The Temple—  
Rise of the social problem in Israel*

Of their racial origin we can only say vaguely that they were Semites, not sharply distinct or different from the other Semites of western Asia; it was their history that made them, not they who made their history. At their very first appearance they are already a mixture of many stocks—only by the most unbelievable virtue could a "pure" race have existed

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them laws of cleanliness modeled upon those of the Egyptian clergy.<sup>21</sup> Greek and Roman writers repeat this explanation of the Exodus;<sup>22</sup> but their anti-Semitic inclinations make them unreliable guides. One verse of the Biblical account supports Ward's interpretation of the Exodus as a labor strike: "And the king of Egypt said unto them, Wherefore do ye, Moses and Aaron, let the people from their works? Get you unto your burdens."<sup>23</sup>

*Moses* is an Egyptian rather than a Jewish name; perhaps it is a shorter form of *Ahmose*.<sup>24</sup> Professor Garstang, of the Marston Expedition of the University of Liverpool, claims to have discovered, in the royal tombs of Jericho, evidence that Moses was rescued (precisely in 1527 B.C.) by the then Princess, later the great Queen, Hatshepsut; that he was brought up by her as a court favorite, and fled from Egypt upon the accession of her enemy, Thutmose III.<sup>25</sup> He believes that the material found in these tombs confirms the story of the fall of Jericho (Joshua, vi); he dates this fall ca. 1400 B.C., and the Exodus ca. 1447 B.C.<sup>26</sup> As this chronology rests upon the precarious dating of scarabs and pottery, it must be received with respectful scepticism.

among the thousand ethnic cross-currents of the Near East. But the Jews were the purest of all, for they intermarried only very reluctantly with other peoples. Hence they have maintained their type with astonishing tenacity; the Hebrew prisoners on the Egyptian and Assyrian reliefs, despite the prejudices of the artist, are recognizably like the Jews of our own time: there, too, are the long and curved Hittite nose,\* the projecting cheek-bones, the curly hair and beard; though one cannot see, under the Egyptian caricature, the scrawny toughness of body, the subtlety and obstinacy of spirit, that have characterized the Sermite from the "stiff-necked" followers of Moses to the inscrutable Bedouins and tradesmen of today. In the early years of their conquest they dressed in simple tunics, low-crowned hats or turban-like caps, and easy-going sandals; as wealth came they covered their feet with leather shoes, and their tunics with fringed kaftans. Their women, who were among the most beautiful of antiquity,† painted their cheeks and their eyes, wore all the jewelry they could get, and adopted to the best of their ability the newest styles from Babylon, Nineveh, Damascus or Tyre.<sup>21</sup>

Hebrew was among the most majestically sonorous of all the languages of the earth. Despite its gutturals, it was full of masculine music; Renan described it as "a quiver full of arrows, a trumpet of brasses crashing through the air."<sup>22</sup> It did not differ much from the speech of the Phœnicians or the Moabites. The Jews used an alphabet akin to the Phœnician;<sup>23</sup> some scholars believe it to be the oldest alphabet known.<sup>24</sup> They did not bother to write vowels, leaving these for the sense to fill in; even today the Hebrew vowels are mere points adorning the consonants.

The invaders never formed a united nation, but remained for a long time as twelve more or less independent tribes, organized and ruled on the principles not of the state but of the patriarchal family. The oldest head of each family group participated in a council of elders which was the last court of law and justice in the tribe, and which coöperated with the leaders of other tribes only under the compulsion of dire emergency. The family was the most convenient economic unit in tilling the fields and tending the flocks; this was the source of its strength, its authority, and its political power. A measure of family communism softened the rigors of paternal discipline, and created memories to which the prophets harked back disconsolately in more individualistic days. For when, under

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\* Cf. p. 287 above.

† Cf. the story of Esther, and the descriptions of Rebecca, Bathsheba, etc.

Solomon, industry came to the towns, and made the individual the new economic unit of production, the authority of the family weakened, even as today, and the inherent order of Jewish life decayed.

The "judges" to whom the tribes occasionally gave a united obedience were not magistrates, but chieftains or warriors—even when they were priests.<sup>24</sup> "In those days there was no king in Israel, but every man did that which was right in his own eyes."<sup>25</sup> This incredibly Jeffersonian condition gave way under the needs of war; the threat of domination by the Philistines brought a temporary unity to the tribes, and persuaded them to appoint a king whose authority over them should be continuous. The prophet Samuel warned them against certain disadvantages in rule by one man:

And Samuel said, This will be the manner of the king that shall reign over you: He will take your sons and appoint them for himself, for his chariots, and to be his horsemen; and some shall run before his chariots. And he will appoint them captains over thousands, and captains over fifties; and will set them to ear his ground, and to reap his harvest, and to make his instruments of war, and instruments of his chariots. And he will take your daughters to be confectionaries, and to be cooks, and to be bakers. And he will take your fields, and your vineyards, and your oliveyards, even the best of them, and give them to his servants. And he will take your menservants, and your maidservants, and your goodliest young men, and your asses, and put them to his work. He will take the tenth of your sheep, and ye shall be his servants. And ye shall cry out in that day because of your king which ye shall have chosen you; and the Lord will not hear you in that day.

Nevertheless the people refused to obey the voice of Samuel; and they said, Nay, but we shall have a king over us; that we also may be like all the nations; and that our king may judge us, and go out before us, and fight our battles.<sup>26</sup>

Their first king, Saul, gave them good and evil instructively: fought their battles bravely, lived simply on his own estate at Gileah, pursued young David with murderous attentions, and was beheaded in flight from the Philistines. The Jews learned, then, at the first opportunity, that wars of succession are among the appanages of monarchy. Unless the little epic of Saul, Jonathan and David is merely a masterpiece of literary

creation\* (for there is no contemporary mention of these personalities outside the Bible), this first king, after a bloody interlude, was succeeded by David, heroic slayer of Goliath, tender lover of Jonathan and many maidens, half-naked dancer of wild dances,<sup>28</sup> seductive player of the harp, sweet singer of marvelous songs, and able king of the Jews for almost forty years. Here, so early in literature, is a character fully drawn, real with all the contradictory passions of a living soul: as ruthless as his time, his tribe and his god, and yet as ready to pardon his enemies as Cæsar was, or Christ; putting captives to death wholesale, like any Assyrian monarch; charging his son Solomon to "bring down to the grave with blood" the "hoar head" of old Shimei who had cursed him many years before;<sup>29</sup> taking Uriah's wife into his harem incontinently, and sending Uriah into the front line of battle to get rid of him;<sup>30</sup> accepting Nathan's rebuke humbly, but keeping the lovely Bathsheba none the less; forgiving Saul almost seventy times seven, merely taking his shield when he might have taken his life; sparing and supporting Mephibosheth, a possible pretender to his throne; pardoning his ungrateful son Absalom, who had been caught in armed rebellion, and bitterly mourning that son's death in treasonable battle against his father ("O my son Absalom! my son, my son, Absalom! would God I had died for thee, O Absalom, my son, my son!")<sup>31</sup>—this is an authentic man, of full and varied elements, bearing within him all the vestiges of barbarism, and all the promise of civilization.

On coming to the throne Solomon, for his peace of mind, slew all rival claimants. This did not disturb Yahveh, who, taking a liking to the young king, promised him wisdom beyond all men before or after him.<sup>32</sup> Perhaps Solomon deserves his reputation; for not only did he combine in his own life the epicurean enjoyment of every pleasure and luxury with a stoic fulfillment of all his obligations as a king,<sup>†</sup> but he taught his people the values of law and order, and lured them from discord and war to industry and peace. He lived up to his name,<sup>‡</sup> for during his long reign Jerusalem, which David had made the capital, took advantage of this unwonted quiet, and increased and multiplied its wealth. Originally the city§ had been built around a well; then it had been turned into a fortress

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\* Like the jolly story of Samson, who burned the crops of the Philistines by letting loose in them three hundred foxes with torches tied to their tails, and, in the manner of some orators, slew a thousand men with the jawbone of an ass.<sup>27</sup>

† "He spake three thousand proverbs, and his songs were a thousand and five."<sup>28</sup>

‡ Taken from *Shalom*, meaning peace.

§ Mentioned in the Tell-el-Amarna tablets as Ursalimnu, or Urusalim.



because of its exalted position above the plain; now, though it was not on the main lines of trade, it became one of the busiest markets of the Near East. By maintaining the good relations that David had established with King Hiram of Tyre, Solomon encouraged Phœnician merchants to direct their caravans through Palestine, and developed a profitable exchange of agricultural products from Israel for the manufactured articles of Tyre and Sidon. He built a fleet of mercantile vessels on the Red Sea, and persuaded Hiram to use this new route, instead of Egypt, in trading with Arabia and Africa." It was probably in Arabia that Solomon mined the gold and precious stones of "Ophir";<sup>77</sup> probably from Arabia that the Queen of "Sheba" came to seek his friendship, and perhaps his aid.<sup>78</sup> We are told that "the weight of gold that came to Solomon in one year was six hundred three score and six talents of gold";<sup>79</sup> and though this could not compare with the revenues of Babylon, Nineveh or Tyre, it lifted Solomon to a place among the richest potentates of his time.\*

Some of this wealth he used for his private pleasure. He indulged particularly his hobby for collecting concubines—though historians undramatically reduce his "seven hundred wives and three hundred concubines" to sixty and eighty.<sup>80</sup> Perhaps by some of these marriages he wished to strengthen his friendship with Egypt and Phœnicia; perhaps, like Rameses II, he was animated with a eugenic passion for transmitting his superior abilities. But most of his revenues went to the strengthening of his government and the beautification of his capital. He repaired the citadel around which the city had been built; he raised forts and stationed garrisons at strategic points of his realm to discourage both invasion and revolt. He divided his kingdom, for administrative purposes, into twelve districts which deliberately crossed the tribal boundaries; by this plan he hoped to lessen the clannish separatism of the tribes, and to weld them into one people. He failed, and Judea failed with him. To finance his government he organized expeditions to mine precious metals, and to import luxuries and strange delicacies—e.g., "ivory, apes and peacocks"<sup>81</sup>—which could be sold to the growing *bourgeoisie* at high prices; he levied

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\* On the value of the talent in the ancient Near East cf. p. 228 above. The value varied from time to time; but we should not be exaggerating it if we rated the talent, in Solomon's day, as having a purchasing power of over \$10,000 in our contemporary money. Probably the Hebrew writer spoke in a literary way, and we must not take his figures too seriously. On the fluctuations of Hebrew currency cf. the *Jewish Encyclopedia*, articles "Numismatics" and "Shekel." Coinage, as distinct from rings or ingots of silver or gold, does not appear in Palestine until about 650 B.C.<sup>82</sup>

tolls upon all caravans passing through Palestine; he put a poll tax upon all his subject peoples, required contributions from every district except his own, and reserved to the state a monopoly of the trade in yarn, horses and chariots.<sup>11</sup> Josephus assures us that Solomon "made silver as plentiful in Jerusalem as stones in the street."<sup>12</sup> Finally he resolved to adorn the city with a new temple for Yahveh and a new palace for himself.

We gather some sense of the turbulence of Jewish life from the fact that before this time there had been, apparently, no temple at all in Judea, not even in Jerusalem; the people had sacrificed to Yahveh in local sanctuaries or on crude altars in the hills.<sup>13</sup> Solomon called the more substantial burghers together, announced his plans for a temple, pledged to it great quantities of gold, silver, brass, iron, wood and precious stones from his own stores, and gently suggested that the temple would welcome contributions from the citizens. If we may believe the chronicler, they pledged for his use five thousand gold talents, ten thousand silver talents, and as much iron and brass as he might need; "and they with whom precious stones were found gave them to the treasure of the house of the Lord."<sup>14</sup> The site chosen was on a hill; the walls of the Temple rose, like the Parthenon, continuously from the rocky slopes.\* The design was in the style that the Phœnicians had adopted from Egypt, with decorative ideas from Assyria and Babylon. The Temple was not a church, but a quadrangular enclosure composed of several buildings. The main structure was of modest dimensions—about one hundred and twenty-four feet in length, fifty-five in breadth, and fifty-two in height; half the length of the Parthenon, a quarter of the length of Chartres.<sup>15</sup> The Hebrews who came from all Judea to contribute to the Temple, and later to worship in it, forgivably looked upon it as one of the wonders of the world; they had not seen the immensely greater temples of Thebes, Babylon and Nineveh. Before the main structure rose a "porch" some one hundred and eighty feet high, overlaid with gold. Gold was spread lavishly about, if we may credit our sole authority: on the beams of the main ceiling, on the posts, the doors and the walls, on the candelabra, the lamps, the snuffers, the spoons, the censers, and "a hundred basins of gold." Precious stones were inlaid here and there, and two gold-plated cherubim guarded the Ark of the Covenant.<sup>16</sup> The walls were of great square stones; the ceiling, posts and doors were of carved cedar and olive wood. Most of the

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\* It is likely that the site of the Temple was that which is now covered by the Moslem shrine El-haram-esh-sharif; but no remains of the Temple have been found.<sup>17</sup>

building materials were brought from Phœnicia, and most of the skilled work was done by artisans imported from Sidon and Tyre." The unskilled labor was herded together by a ruthless *corvée* of 150,000 men, after the fashion of the time.<sup>60</sup>

So for seven years the Temple rose, to provide for four centuries a lordly home for Yahveh. Then for thirteen years more the artisans and people labored to build a much larger edifice, for Solomon and his harem. Merely one wing of it—"the house of the forest of Lebanon"—was four times as large as the Temple.<sup>61</sup> The walls of the main building were made of immense stone blocks fifteen feet in length, and were ornamented with statuary, reliefs and paintings in the Assyrian style. The palace contained halls for the royal reception of distinguished visitors, apartments for the King, separate quarters for the more important wives, and an arsenal as the final basis of government. Not a stone of the gigantic edifice survives, and its site is unknown.<sup>62</sup>

Having established his kingdom, Solomon settled down to enjoy it. As his reign proceeded he paid less and less attention to religion and frequented his harem rather more than the Temple. The Biblical chroniclers reproach him bitterly for his gallantry in building altars to the exotic deities of his foreign wives, and cannot forgive his philosophical—or perhaps political—impartiality to the gods. The people admired his wisdom, but suspected in it a certain centripetal quality; the Temple and the palace had cost them much gold and blood, and were not more popular with them than the Pyramids had been with the workingmen of Egypt. The upkeep of these establishments required considerable taxation, and few governments have made taxation popular. When he died Israel was exhausted, and a discontented proletariat had been created whose labor found no steady employment, and whose sufferings were to transform the warlike cult of Yahveh into the almost socialistic religion of the prophets.

### III. THE GOD OF HOSTS

*Polytheism—Yahveh—Henotheism—Character of the Hebrew religion—The idea of sin—Sacrifice—Circumcision—The priesthood—Strange gods*

Next to the promulgation of the "Book of Law," the building of the Temple was the most important event in the epic of the Jews. It not only

gave Yahveh a home, but it gave Judea a spiritual center and capital, a vehicle of tradition, a memory to serve as a pillar of fire through centuries of wandering over the earth. And it played its part in lifting the Hebrew religion from a primitive polytheism to a faith intense and intolerant, but none the less one of the creative creeds of history.

As they first entered the historic scene the Jews were nomad Bedouins who feared the djinns of the air, and worshiped rocks, cattle, sheep, and the spirits of caves and hills.<sup>33</sup> The cult of the bull, the sheep and the lamb was not neglected; Moses could never quite win his flock from adoration of the Golden Calf, for the Egyptian worship of the bull was still fresh in their memories, and Yahveh was for a long time symbolized in that ferocious vegetarian. In Exodus (xxxii, 25-28) we read how the Jews indulged in a naked dance before the Golden Calf, and how Moses and the Levites—or priestly class—slew three thousand of them in punishment of their idolatry.<sup>4</sup> Of serpent worship there are countless traces in early Jewish history, from the serpent images found in the oldest ruins,<sup>54</sup> to the brazen serpent made by Moses and worshiped in the Temple until the time of Hezekiah (ca. 720 B.C.).<sup>55</sup> As among so many peoples, the snake seemed sacred to the Jews, partly as a phallic symbol of virility, partly as typifying wisdom, subtlety and eternity—literally because of its ability to make both ends meet.<sup>56</sup> Baal, symbolized in conical upright stones much like the *linga* of the Hindus, was venerated by some of the Hebrews as the male principle of reproduction, the husband of the land that he fertilized.<sup>57</sup> Just as primitive polytheism survived in the worship of angels and saints, and in the *teraphim*, or portable idols, that served as household gods,<sup>58</sup> so the magical notions rife in the early cults persisted to a late day despite the protests of prophets and priests. The people seem to have looked upon Moses and Aaron as magicians,<sup>59</sup> and to have patronized professional diviners and sorcerers. Divination was sought at times by shaking dice (*Urim* and *Thummim*) out of a box (*ephod*)—a ritual still used to ascertain the will of the gods. It is to the credit of the priests that they opposed these practices, and preached an exclusive reliance on the magic of sacrifice, prayer and contributions.

Slowly the conception of Yahveh as the one national god took form, and gave to Jewish faith a unity and simplicity lifted up above the chaotic

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\* Other vestiges of animal worship among the ancient Hebrews may be found in 1 Kings, xii, 28, and Ezekiel, viii, 10. Ahab, King of Israel, worshiped heifers in the century after Solomon.<sup>60</sup>

multiplicity of the Mesopotamian pantheons. Apparently the conquering Jews took one of the gods of Canaan, Yahu,\* and re-created him in their own image as a stern, warlike, "stiff-necked" deity, with almost lovable limitations. For this god makes no claim to omniscience: he asks the Jews to identify their homes by sprinkling them with the blood of the sacrificial lamb, lest he should destroy their children inadvertently along with the first-born of the Egyptians;<sup>a</sup> he is not above making mistakes, of which man is his worst; he regrets, too late, that he created Adam, or allowed Saul to become king. He is, now and then, greedy, irascible, bloodthirsty, capricious, petulant: "I will be gracious to whom I will be gracious, and will show mercy to whom I will show mercy."<sup>99</sup> He approves Jacob's use of deceit in revenging himself upon Laban;<sup>a</sup> his conscience is as flexible as that of a bishop in politics. He is talkative, and likes to make long speeches; but he is shy, and will not allow men to see anything of him but his hind parts.<sup>a</sup> Never was there so thoroughly human a god.

Originally he seems to have been a god of thunder, dwelling in the hills,<sup>a</sup> and worshiped for the same reason that the youthful Gorki was a believer when it thundered. The authors of the Pentateuch, to whom religion was an instrument of statesmanship, formed this Vulcan into Mars, so that in their energetic hands Yahveh became predominantly an imperialistic, expansionist God of Hosts, who fights for his people as fiercely as the gods of the *Iliad*. "The Lord is a man of war," says "Moses";<sup>a</sup> and David echoes him: "He teacheth my hands to war."<sup>100</sup> Yahveh promises to "destroy all the people to whom" the Jews "shall come," and to drive out the Hivite, the Canaanite and the Hittite "by little and little";<sup>a</sup> and he claims as his own all the territory conquered by the Jews.<sup>a</sup> He will have no pacifist nonsense; he knows that even a Promised Land can be won, and held, only by the sword; he is a god of war because he has to be; it will take centuries of military defeat, political subjugation, and moral development, to transform him into the gentle and loving Father of Hillel and Christ. He is as vain as a soldier; he drinks up praise with a bottomless appetite, and he is anxious to display his prowess by drowning the Egyptians: "They shall know that I am the Lord when I have gotten me honor upon Pharaoh."<sup>101</sup> To gain successes for his people he commits or commands brutalities as repugnant to our taste as they were acceptable to the morals of the age; he slaughters whole

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\* Among some Bronze Age (3000 B.C.) ruins found in Canaan in 1931 were pieces of pottery bearing the name of a Canaanite deity, Yah or Yahu.<sup>60</sup>

nations with the naïve pleasure of a Gulliver fighting for Lilliput. Because the Jews "commit whoredom" with the daughters of Moab he bids Moses: "Take all the heads of the people, and hang them up before the Lord against the sun";<sup>72</sup> it is the morality of Ashurbanipal and Ashur. He offers to show mercy to those who love him and keep his commandments, but, like some resolute germ, he will punish children for the sins of their fathers, their grandfathers, even their great-great-grandfathers.<sup>73</sup> He is so ferocious that he thinks of destroying all the Jews for worshipping the Golden Calf; and Moses has to argue with him that he should control himself. "Turn from thy fierce wrath," the man tells his god, "and repent of this evil against thy people"; and "the Lord repented of the evil which he thought to do unto his people."<sup>74</sup> Again Yahveh proposes to exterminate the Jews root and branch for rebelling against Moses, but Moses appeals to his better nature, and bids him think what people will say when they hear of such a thing.<sup>75</sup> He asks a cruel test—human sacrifice of the bitterest sort—from Abraham. Like Moses, Abraham teaches Yahveh the principles of morals, and persuades him not to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah if there shall be found fifty—forty—thirty—twenty—ten good men in those cities;<sup>76</sup> bit by bit he lures his god towards decency, and illustrates the manner in which the moral development of man compels the periodical re-creation of his deities. The curses with which Yahveh threatens his chosen people if they disobey him are models of vituperation, and inspired those who burned heretics in the Inquisition, or excommunicated Spinoza:

Cursed shalt thou be in the city, and cursed shalt thou be in the field. . . . Cursed shall be the fruit of thy body, and the fruit of thy land. . . . Cursed shalt thou be when thou comest in, and cursed shalt thou be when thou goest out. . . . The Lord shall smite thee with a consumption, and with a fever, and with an inflammation. . . . The Lord will smite thee with the botch of Egypt, and with the emerods (tumors), and with the scab, and with the itch, whereof thou canst not be healed. The Lord shall smite thee with madness, and blindness, and astonishment of heart. . . . Also every sickness, and every plague, which is not written in the Book of this Law, them will the Lord bring upon thee, until thou be destroyed.<sup>77</sup>

Yahveh was not the only god whose existence was recognized by the Jews, or by himself; all that he asked, in the First Commandment, was that

he should be placed above the rest. "I am a jealous god," he confesses, and he bids his followers "utterly overthrow" his rivals, and "quite break down their images."<sup>77</sup> The Jews, before Isaiah, seldom thought of Yahveh as the god of all tribes, even of all Hebrews. The Moabites had their god Chemosh, to whom Naomi thought it right that Ruth should remain loyal;<sup>78</sup> Baalzebub was the god of Ekron, Milcom was the god of Ammon: the economic and political separatism of these peoples naturally resulted in what we might call their theological independence. Moses sings, in his famous song, "Who is like unto thee, O Lord, among the gods?"<sup>79</sup> and Solomon says, "Great is our god above all gods."<sup>80</sup> Not only was Tammuz accepted as a real god by all but the most educated Jews, but his cult was at one time so popular in Judea that Ezekiel complained that the ritual wailing for Tammuz' death could be heard in the Temple.<sup>81</sup> So distinct and autonomous were the Jewish tribes that even in the time of Jeremiah many of them had their own deities: "according to the number of thy cities are thy gods, O Judah"; and the gloomy prophet goes on to protest against the worship of Baal and Moloch by his people.<sup>82</sup> With the growth of political unity under David and Solomon, and the centering of worship in the Temple at Jerusalem, theology reflected history and politics, and Yahveh became the sole god of the Jews. Beyond this "henotheism"\* they made no further progress towards monotheism until the Prophets.† Even in the Yahvistic stage the Hebraic religion came closer to monotheism than any other pre-Prophetic faith except the ephemeral sun-worship of Ikhnaton. At least equal as sentiment and poetry to the polytheism of Babylonia and Greece, Judaism was immensely superior to the other religions of the time in majesty and power, in philosophic unity and grasp, in moral fervor and influence.

This intense and sombre religion never took on any of the ornate ritual and joyous ceremonies that marked the worship of the Egyptian and Babylonian gods. A sense of human nothingness before an arbitrary deity darkened all ancient Jewish thought. Despite the efforts of Solomon to beau-

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\* A clumsy but useful word coined by Max Müller to designate the worship of a god as supreme, combined with the explicit (as in India) or tacit (as in Judea) admission of other gods.

† Elisha, however, as far back as the ninth century B.C., announced one God: "I know that there is no God in all the earth but in Israel."<sup>83</sup> It should be remembered that even modern monotheism is highly relative and incomplete. As the Jews worshiped a tribal god, so we worship a European god—or an English, or a German, or an Italian, god; no moment of modesty comes to remind us that the abounding millions of India, China and Japan—not to speak of the theologians of the jungle—do not yet recognize the God of our Fathers. Not until the machine weaves all the earth into one economic web, and forces all the nations under one rule, will there be one god—for the earth.

tify the cult of Yahveh with color and sound, the worship of this awful divinity remained for many centuries a religion of fear rather than of love. One wonders, in looking back upon these faiths, whether they brought as much consolation as terror to humanity. Religions of hope and love are a luxury of security and order; the need for striking fear into a subject or rebellious people made most primitive religions cults of mystery and dread. The Ark of the Covenant, containing the sacred scrolls of the Law, symbolized by its untouchability the character of the Jewish creed. When the pious Uzzah, to prevent the Ark from falling into the dust, caught it for a moment in his hands, "the anger of the Lord was kindled against Uzzah, and God smote him there for his error; and there he died."<sup>81</sup>

The central idea in Judaic theology was that of sin. Never has another people been so fond of virtue—unless it was those Puritans who seemed to step out of the Old Testament with no interruption of Catholic centuries. Since the flesh was weak and the Law complex, sin was inevitable, and the Jewish spirit was often overcast with the thought of sin's consequences, from the withholding of rain to the ruin of all Israel. There was no Hell in this faith as a distinctive place of punishment; but almost as bad was the Sheol, or "land of darkness" under the earth, which received all the dead, good and wicked alike, except such divine favorites as Moses, Enoch and Elijah. The Jews, however, made little reference to a life beyond the grave; their creed said nothing of personal immortality, and confined its rewards and punishments to this mundane life. Not until the Jews had lost hope of earthly triumph did they take over, probably from Persia and perhaps also from Egypt, the notion of personal resurrection. It was out of this spiritual *dénouement* that Christianity was born.

The threat and consequence of sin might be offset by prayer or sacrifice. Semitic, like "Aryan," sacrifice began by offering human victims;<sup>82</sup> then it offered animals—the "first fruits of the flocks"—and food from the fields; finally it compromised by offering praise. At first no animal might be eaten unless killed and blessed by the priest, and offered for a moment to the god.<sup>83</sup> Circumcision partook of the nature of a sacrifice, and perhaps of a commutation: the god took a part for the whole. Menstruation and childbirth, like sin, made a person spiritually unclean, and necessitated ritual purification by priestly sacrifice and prayer. At every turn tabus hedged in the faithful; sin lay potential in almost every desire, and donations were required in atonement for almost every sin.

Only the priests could offer sacrifice properly, or explain correctly the ritual and mysteries of the faith. The priests were a closed caste, to



which none but the descendants of Levi<sup>d</sup> could belong. They could not inherit property,<sup>e</sup> but they were exempt from all taxation, toll, or tribute;<sup>f</sup> they levied a tithe upon the harvests of the flocks, and turned to their own use such offerings to the Temple as were left unused by the god.<sup>g</sup> After the Exile, the wealth of the clergy grew with that of the nascent community; and since this sacerdotal wealth was well administered, augmented and preserved, it finally made the priests of the Second Temple, in Jerusalem as in Thebes and Babylon, more powerful than the king.

Nevertheless the growth of clerical power and religious education never quite sufficed to win the Hebrews from superstition and idolatry. The hill-tops and groves continued to harbor alien gods and to witness secret rites; a substantial minority of the people prostrated themselves before sacred stones, or worshiped Baal or Astarte, or practised divination in the Babylonian manner, or set up images and burned incense to them, or knelt before the brazen serpent or the Golden Calf, or filled the Temple with the noise of heathen feasting,<sup>h</sup> or made their children "pass through the fire" in sacrifice;<sup>i</sup> even some of the kings, like Solomon and Ahab, went "a-whoring" after foreign gods. Holy men like Elijah and Elisha arose who, without necessarily becoming priests, preached against these practices, and tried by the example of their lives to lead their people into righteousness. Out of these conditions and beginnings, and out of the rise of poverty and exploitation in Israel, came the supreme figures in Jewish religion—those passionate Prophets who purified and elevated the creed of the Jews, and prepared it for its vicarious conquest of the western world.

#### IV. THE FIRST RADICALS

*The class war—Origin of the Prophets—Amos at Jerusalem—  
Isaiah—His attacks upon the rich—His doctrine of a Messiah—  
The influence of the Prophets*

Since poverty is created by wealth, and never knows itself poor until riches stare it in the face, so it required the fabulous fortune of Solomon to mark the beginning of the class war in Israel. Solomon, like Peter and Lenin, tried to move too quickly from an agricultural to an industrial state. Not only did the toil and taxes involved in his enterprises impose great burdens upon his people, but when those undertakings were com-

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\* One of the sons of Jacob.

plete, after twenty years of industry, a proletariat had been created in Jerusalem which, lacking sufficient employment, became a source of political faction and corruption in Palestine, precisely as it was to become in Rome. Slums developed step by step with the rise of private wealth and the increasing luxury of the court. Exploitation and usury became recognized practises among the owners of great estates and the merchants and money-lenders who flocked about the Temple. The landlords of Ephraim, said Amos, "sold the righteous for silver and the poor for a pair of shoes."<sup>88</sup>

This growing gap between the needy and the affluent, and the sharpening of that conflict between the city and the country which always accompanies an industrial civilization, had something to do with the division of Palestine into two hostile kingdoms after the death of Solomon: a northern kingdom of Ephraim,<sup>89</sup> with its capital at Samaria, and a southern kingdom of Judah, with its capital at Jerusalem. From that time on the Jews were weakened by fraternal hatred and strife, breaking out occasionally into bitter war. Shortly after the death of Solomon Jerusalem was captured by Sheshonk, Pharaoh of Egypt, and surrendered, to appease the conqueror, nearly all the gold that Solomon had gathered in his long career of taxation.

It was in this atmosphere of political disruption, economic war, and religious degeneration that the Prophets appeared. The men to whom the word (in Hebrew, *Nabi*†) was first applied were not quite of the character that our reverence would associate with Amos and Isaiah. Some were diviners who could read the secrets of the heart and the past, and foretell the future, according to remuneration; some were fanatics who worked themselves into a frenzy by weird music, strong drink, or dervish-like dances, and spoke, in trances, words which their hearers considered inspired—i.e., breathed into them by some spirit other than their own.<sup>90</sup> Jeremiah speaks with professional scorn of "every man that is mad, and maketh himself a prophet."<sup>91</sup> Some were gloomy recluses, like Elijah; many of them lived in schools or monasteries near the temples; but most of them had private property and wives.<sup>92</sup> From this motley crowd of *fakirs* the Prophets developed into responsible and consistent critics of their age and their people, magnificent street-corner statesmen

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\* This kingdom often called itself "Israel"; but this word will be used, in these pages, to include all the Jews.

† Translated by the Greeks into *pro-phe-tes*, announcer.

who were all "thorough-going anti-clericals,"<sup>97</sup> and "the most uncompromising of anti-Semites,"<sup>98</sup> a cross between soothsayers and socialists. We misunderstand them if we take them as prophets in the weather sense; their predictions were hopes or threats, or pious interpolations,<sup>99</sup> or prognostications after the event;<sup>100</sup> the Prophets themselves did not pretend to foretell, so much as to speak out; they were eloquent members of the Opposition. In one phase they were Tolstoians incensed at industrial exploitation and ecclesiastical chicanery; they came up from the simple countryside, and hurled damnation at the corrupt wealth of the towns.

Amos described himself not as a prophet but as a simple village shepherd. Having left his herds to see Beth-El, he was horrified at the unnatural complexity of the life which he discovered there, the inequality of fortune, the bitterness of competition, the ruthlessness of exploitation. So he "stood in the gate," and lashed the conscienceless rich and their luxuries:

Forasmuch, therefore, as your treading is upon the poor, and ye take from him burdens of wheat; ye have built houses of hewn stone, but ye shall not dwell in them; ye have planted pleasant vineyards, but ye shall not drink wine of them. . . . Woe to them that are at ease in Zion, . . . that lie upon beds of ivory, and stretch themselves upon their couches, and eat the lambs out of the flock, and the calves out of the midst of the stall; that chant to the sound of the viol, and invent to themselves instruments of music, like David; that drink wine in bowls, and anoint themselves with the chief ointments. . . .

I despise your feast-days (saith the Lord); . . . though ye offer me burnt offerings and your meat offerings, I will not accept them. . . . Take thou away from me the noise of thy songs, for I will not hear the melody of thy viols. But let judgment run down as waters, and righteousness as a mighty stream.<sup>101</sup>

This is a new note in the world's literature. It is true that Amos dulls the edge of his idealism by putting into the mouth of his god a Mississippi of threats whose severity and accumulation make the reader sympathize for a moment with the drinkers of wine and the listeners to music. But here, for the first time in the literature of Asia, the social conscience takes definite form, and pours into religion a content that lifts it from ceremony

and flattery to a whip of morals and a call to nobility. With Amos begins the gospel of Jesus Christ.

One of his bitterest predictions seems to have been fulfilled while Amos was still alive. "Thus saith the Lord: As the shepherd taketh out of the mouth of the lion two legs, or a piece of an ear, so shall the children of Israel be taken out that dwell in Samaria in the corner of a bed, and in Damascus in a couch. . . . And the houses of ivory shall perish, and the great houses shall have an end."<sup>102\*</sup> About the same time another prophet threatened Samaria with destruction in one of those myriads of vivid phrases which King James's translators minted for the currency of our speech out of the wealth of the Bible: "The calf of Samaria," said Hosea, "shall be broken into pieces; for they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind."<sup>103</sup> In 733 the young kingdom of Judah, threatened by Ephraim in alliance with Syria, appealed to Assyria for help. Assyria came, took Damascus, subjected Syria, Tyre and Palestine to tribute, made note of Jewish efforts to secure Egyptian aid, invaded again, captured Samaria, indulged in unprintable diplomatic exchanges with the King of Judah,<sup>104</sup> failed to take Jerusalem, and retired to Nineveh laden with booty and 200,000 Jewish captives doomed to Assyrian slavery.<sup>105</sup>

It was during this siege of Jerusalem that the prophet Isaiah became one of the great figures of Hebrew history.† Less provincial than Amos, he thought in terms of enduring statesmanship. Convinced that little Judah could not resist the imperial power of Assyria, even with the help of distant Egypt—that broken staff which would pierce the hand that should try to use it—he pled with King Ahaz, and then with King Hezekiah, to remain neutral in the war between Assyria and Ephraim; like Amos and Hosea he foresaw the fall of Samaria,<sup>106</sup> and the end of the northern kingdom. When, however, the Assyrians besieged Jerusalem, Isaiah counseled Hezekiah not to yield. The sudden withdrawal of Sennacherib's hosts seemed to justify him, and for a time his repute was high with the King and the people. Always his advice was to deal justly,

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\* The reference is apparently to the room, made entirely of ivory, in the palace at Samaria where King Ahab lived with his "painted queen," Jezebel (ca. 875-50 B.C.). Several fine ivories have been found by the Harvard Library Expedition in the ruins of a palace tentatively identified with Ahab's.<sup>102</sup>

† The book that bears his name is a collection of "prophecies" (i.e., sermons) by two or more authors ranging in time from 710 to 300 B.C.<sup>107</sup> Chapters i-xxxix are usually ascribed to the "First Isaiah," who is here discussed.

and then leave the issue to Yahveh, who would use Assyria as his agent for a time, but in the end would destroy her, too. Indeed, all the nations known to Isaiah were, according to him, destined to be struck down by Yahveh; in a few chapters (xvi-xxiii) Moab, Syria, Ethiopia, Egypt, Babylon and Tyre are dedicated to destruction; "every one shall howl."<sup>100</sup> This ardor for ruination, this litany of curses, mars Isaiah's book, as it mars all the prophetic literature of the Bible.

Nevertheless his denunciation falls where it belongs—upon economic exploitation and greed. Here his eloquence rises to the highest point reached in the Old Testament, in passages that are among the peaks of the world's prose:

The Lord will enter into judgment with the ancients of his people and the princes thereof; for ye have eaten up the vineyard; the spoil of the poor is in your houses. What mean ye that ye beat my people to pieces, and grind the faces of the poor? . . . Woe unto them that join house to house, that lay field to field, till there be no place, that they may be placed alone in the midst of the earth! . . . Woe unto them that decree unrighteous decrees to turn aside the needy from judgment (justice), and to take away the right from the poor of my people, that widows may be their prey, and that they may rob the fatherless. And what will ye do in the day of visitation, and in the desolation which shall come from afar? to whom will ye flee for help, and where will ye leave your glory?<sup>101</sup>

He is filled with scorn of those who, while fleecing the poor, present a pious face to the world.

To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the Lord. I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts. . . . Your appointed feasts my soul hateth; they are a trouble unto me; I am weary to hear them. And when ye spread forth your hands I will hide mine eyes from you; yea, when ye make many prayers I will not hear; your hands are full of blood. Wash ye, make ye clean, put away the evil of your doings from before mine eyes, cease to do evil; learn to do well; seek judgment (justice), relieve the oppressed, judge the fatherless, plead for the widow.<sup>102</sup>

He is bitter, but he does not despair of his people; just as Amos had ended his prophecies with a prediction, strangely apt today, of the



FIG. 35—*A street in Jerusalem*

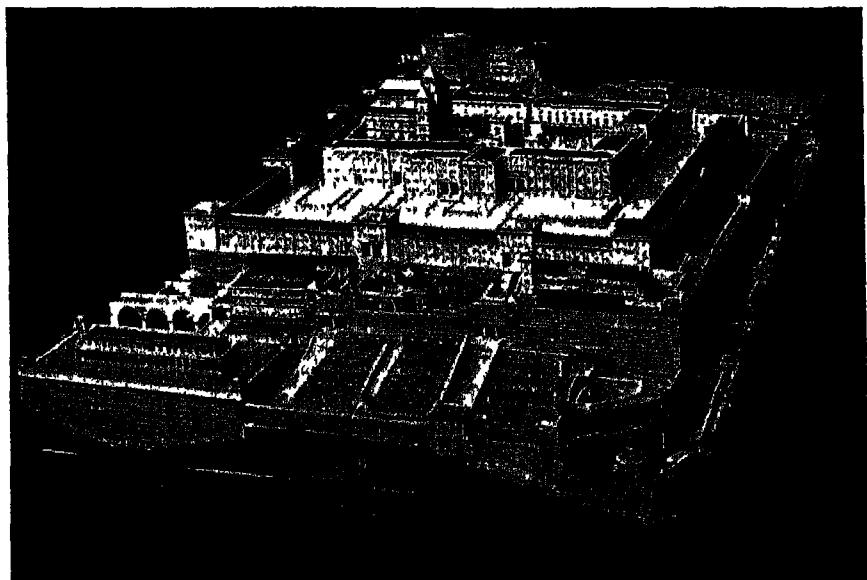


FIG. 36—*Hypothetical restoration of Solomon's Temple*  
Underwood & Underwood



FIG. 37—*The ruins of Persepolis*  
Courtesy of the Oriental Institute, University of Chicago

restoration of the Jews to their native land,<sup>112</sup> so Isaiah concludes by formulating the Messianic hope—the trust of the Jews in some Redeemer who will end their political divisions, their subjection, and their misery, and bring an era of universal brotherhood and peace:

Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel. . . . For unto us a child is born: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, the Prince of Peace. . . . And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse. . . . And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord. . . . With righteousness shall he judge the poor, and reprove with equity for the meek of the earth; and he shall smite the earth with the rod of his mouth, and with the breath of his lips shall he slay the wicked. And righteousness shall be the girdle of his loins, and faithfulness the girdle of his reins. The wolf also shall dwell with the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little child shall lead them. . . . And they shall beat their swords into ploughshares, and their spears into pruning-hooks: nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more.<sup>113</sup>

It was an admirable aspiration, but not for many generations yet would it express the mood of the Jews. The priests of the Temple listened with a well-controlled sympathy to these useful encouragements to piety; certain sects looked back to the Prophets for part of their inspiration; and perhaps these exhortations of all sensual delight had some share in intensifying the desert-born Puritanism of the Jews. But for the most part the old life of the palace and the tent, the market-place and the field, went on as before; war took its choice of every generation, and slavery continued to be the lot of the alien; the merchant cheated with his scales,<sup>114</sup> and tried to atone with sacrifice and prayer.

It was upon the Judaism of post-Exilic days, and upon the world through Judaism and Christianity, that the Prophets left their deepest mark. In Amos and Isaiah is the beginning of both Christianity and socialism, the spring from which has flowed a stream of Utopias wherein



no poverty or war shall disturb human brotherhood and peace; they are the source of the early Jewish conception of a Messiah who would seize the government, reestablish the temporal power of the Jews, and inaugurate a dictatorship of the dispossessed among mankind. Isaiah and Amos began, in a military age, the exaltation of those virtues of simplicity and gentleness, of cooperation and friendliness, which Jesus was to make a vital element in his creed. They were the first to undertake the heavy task of reforming the God of Hosts into a God of Love; they conscripted Yahveh for humanitarianism as the radicals of the nineteenth century conscripted Christ for socialism. It was they who, when the Bible was printed in Europe, fired the Germanic mind with a rejuvenated Christianity, and lighted the torch of the Reformation; it was their fierce and intolerant virtue that formed the Puritans. Their moral philosophy was based upon a theory that would bear better documentation—that the righteous man will prosper, and the wicked will be struck down; but even if that should be a delusion it is the failing of a noble mind. The prophets had no conception of freedom, but they loved justice, and called for an end to the tribal limitations of morality. They offered to the unfortunate of the earth a vision of brotherhood that became the precious and unforgotten heritage of many generations.

#### V. THE DEATH AND RESURRECTION OF JERUSALEM

*The birth of the Bible—The destruction of Jerusalem—The Babylonian Captivity—Jeremiah—Ezekiel—The Second Isaiah—  
The liberation of the Jews—The Second Temple*

Their greatest contemporary influence was on the writing of the Bible. As the people fell away from the worship of Yahveh to the adoration of alien gods, the priests began to wonder whether the time had not come to make a final stand against the disintegration of the national faith. Taking a leaf from the Prophets, who attributed to Yahveh the passionate convictions of their own souls, they resolved to issue to the people a communication from God himself, a code of laws that would reinvigorate the moral life of the nation, and would at the same time attract the support of the Prophets by embodying the less extreme of their ideas. They readily won King Josiah to their plan; and about the eighteenth year of his reign the priest Hilkiah announced to the King that he had "found" in the secret archives of the Temple an astonishing scroll in

which the great Moses himself, at the direct dictation of Yahveh, had settled once for all those problems of history and conduct that were being so hotly debated by prophets and priests. The discovery made a great stir. Josiah called the elders of Judah to the Temple, and there read to them the "Book of the Covenant" in the presence (we are told) of thousands of people. Then he solemnly swore that he would henceforth abide by the laws of this book; and "he caused all that were present to stand to it."<sup>106</sup>

We do not know just what this "Book of the Covenant" was; it may have been Exodus xx-xxiii, or it may have been Deuteronomy.<sup>107</sup> We need not suppose that it had been invented on the spur of the situation; it merely formulated, and put into writing, decrees, demands and exhortations which for centuries had emanated from the prophets and the Temple. In any event, those who heard the reading, and even those who only heard of it, were deeply impressed. Josiah took advantage of this mood to raid the altars of Yahveh's rivals in Judah; he cast "out of the temple of the Lord all the vessels that were made for Baal," he put down the idolatrous priests, and "them also that burned incense unto Baal, to the sun, and to the moon, and to the planets"; he "defiled Topheth, . . . that no man might make his son or his daughter to pass through the fire to Molech"; and he smashed the altars that Solomon had built for Chemosh, Milcom and Astarte.<sup>108</sup>

These reforms did not seem to propitiate Yahveh, or bring him to the aid of his people. Nineveh fell as the Prophets had foretold, but only to leave little Judah subject first to Egypt and then to Babylon. When Pharaoh Necho, bound for Syria, tried to pass through Palestine, Josiah, relying upon Yahveh, resisted him on the ancient battle-site of Megiddo—only to be defeated and slain. A few years later Nebuchadrezzar overwhelmed Necho at Carchemish, and made Judah a Babylonian dependency. Josiah's successors sought by secret diplomacy to liberate themselves from the clutch of Babylon, and thought to bring Egypt to their rescue; but the fiery Nebuchadrezzar, getting wind of it, poured his soldiery into Palestine, captured Jerusalem, took King Jehoiakim prisoner, put Zedekiah on the throne of Judah, and carried 10,000 Jews into bondage. But Zedekiah, too, loved liberty, or power, and rebelled against Babylon. Thereupon Nebuchadrezzar returned, and—resolving to settle the Jewish problem once and for all, as he thought—recaptured Jerusalem, burned it to the ground, destroyed the Temple of Solomon, slew Zede-

kiah's sons before his face, gouged out his eyes, and carried practically all the population of the city into captivity in Babylonia."<sup>118</sup> Later a Jewish poet sang one of the world's great songs about that unhappy caravan:

By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when  
we remembered Zion.

We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song;  
and they that wasted us required of us mirth, saying, Sing us one  
of the songs of Zion.

How shall we sing the Lord's song in a strange land?

If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my  
mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy."<sup>119</sup>

In all this crisis the bitterest and most eloquent of the Prophets defended Babylon as a scourge in the hands of God, denounced the rulers of Judah as obstinate fools, and advised such complete surrender to Nebuchadrezzar that the modern reader is tempted to wonder could Jeremiah have been a paid agent of Babylonia. "I have made the earth, the man and the beast that are upon the ground," says Jeremiah's God, . . . "and now have I given all those lands into the hand of Nebuchadrezzar, the King of Babylon, my servant. . . . And all nations shall serve him. And it shall come to pass, that the nation and kingdom which will not serve the same Nebuchadrezzar, the King of Babylon, and that will not put their neck under the yoke of the King of Babylon, that nation will I punish, saith the Lord, with the sword, and with the famine, and with the pestilence, until I have consumed them by his hand."<sup>120</sup>

He may have been a traitor, but the book of his prophecies, supposedly taken down by his disciple Baruch, is not only one of the most passionately eloquent writings in all literature, as rich in vivid imagery as in merciless abuse, but it is marked with a sincerity that begins as a diffident self-questioning, and ends with honest doubts about his own course and all human life. "Woe is me, my mother, that thou hast borne me, a man of strife, and a man of contention to the whole earth! I have neither lent on usury, nor men have lent to me on usury; yet every one of them doth curse me. . . . Cursed be the day wherein I was born."<sup>121</sup> A flame of indignation burned in him at the sight of moral depravity and political folly in his people and its leaders; he felt inwardly compelled to stand in the

gate and call Israel to repentance. All this national decay, all this weakening of the state, this obviously imminent subjection of Judah to Babylon, were, it seemed to Jeremiah, Yahveh's hand laid upon the Jews in punishment for their sins. "Run ye to and fro through the streets of Jerusalem, and see now, and know, and seek in the broad places thereof, if ye can find a man, if there be any that executeth judgment, that seeketh the truth; and I will pardon it."<sup>122</sup> Everywhere iniquity ruled, and sex ran riot; men "were as fed horses in the morning; every one neighed after his neighbor's wife."<sup>123</sup> When the Babylonians besieged Jerusalem the rich men of the city, to propitiate Yahveh, released their Hebrew slaves; but when for a time the siege was raised, and the danger seemed past, the rich apprehended their former slaves, and forced them into their old bondage: it was a summary of human history that Jeremiah could not bear silently.<sup>124</sup> Like the other Prophets, he denounced those hypocrites who with pious faces brought to the Temple some part of the gains they had made from grinding the faces of the poor; the Lord, he reminded them, in the eternal lesson of all finer religion, asked not for sacrifice but for justice.<sup>125</sup> The priests and the prophets, he thinks, are almost as false and corrupt as the merchants; they, too, like the people, need to be morally reborn, to be (in Jeremiah's strange phrase) circumcised in the spirit as well as in the flesh. "Circumcise yourselves to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your heart."<sup>126</sup>

Against these abuses the Prophet preached with a fury rivaled only by the stern saints of Geneva, Scotland and England. Jeremiah cursed the Jews savagely, and took some delight in picturing the ruin of all who would not heed him.<sup>127</sup> Time and again he predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the captivity in Babylon, and wept over the doomed city (whom he called the daughter of Zion) in terms anticipatory of Christ: "Oh, that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might weep day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!"<sup>128</sup>

To the "princes" of Zedekiah's court all this seemed sheer treason; it was dividing the Jews in counsel and spirit in the very hour of war. Jeremiah tantalized them by carrying a wooden yoke around his neck, explaining that all Judah must submit—the more peaceably the better—to the yoke of Babylon; and when Hananiah tore this yoke away Jeremiah cried out that Yahveh would make yokes of iron for all the Jews. The priests tried to stop him by putting his head into the stocks; but from

even that position he continued to denounce them. They arraigned him in the Temple, and wished to kill him, but through some friend among the priests he escaped. Then the princes arrested him, and lowered him by ropes into a dungeon filled with mire; but Zedekiah had him raised to milder imprisonment in the palace court. There the Babylonians found him when Jerusalem fell. On Nebuchadrezzar's orders they treated him well, and exempted him from the general exile. In his old age, says orthodox tradition,<sup>126a</sup> he wrote his "Lamentations," the most eloquent of all the books of the Old Testament. He mourned now the completeness of his triumph and the desolation of Jerusalem, and raised to heaven the unanswerable questions of Job:

How doth the city sit solitary that was full of people! how she is become as a widow! she that was great among the nations, and princess among the provinces, how is she become tributary! . . . Is it nothing to you, all ye that pass by? Behold, and see if there be any sorrow like unto my sorrow. . . . Righteous art thou, O Lord, when I plead with thee: yet let us talk with thee of thy judgments: Wherefore doth the way of the wicked prosper? Wherefore are all they happy that deal very treacherously?<sup>127</sup>

Meanwhile, in Babylon, another preacher was taking up the burden of prophecy. Ezekiel belonged to a priestly family that had been driven to Babylon in the first deportation from Jerusalem. He began his preaching, like the First Isaiah and Jeremiah, with fierce denunciations of idolatry and corruption in Jerusalem. At great length he compared Jerusalem to a harlot, because she sold the favors of her worship to strange gods;<sup>128</sup> he described Samaria and Jerusalem as twin whores; this word was as popular with him as with the dramatists of the Stuart Restoration. He made long lists of the sins of Jerusalem, and then condemned her to capture and destruction. Like Isaiah, he doomed the nations impartially, and announced the sins and fall of Moab, Tyre, Egypt, Assyria, even of the mysterious kingdom of Magog.<sup>129</sup> But he was not as bitter as Jeremiah; in the end he relented, declared that the Lord would save "a remnant" of the Jews, and foretold the resurrection of their city;<sup>130</sup> he described in vision the new Temple that would be built there, and outlined a Utopia in which the priests would be supreme, and in which Yahveh would dwell among his people forever.

He hoped, with this happy ending, to keep up the spirits of the exiles, and to retard their assimilation into the Babylonian culture and blood. Then as now it seemed that this process of absorption would destroy the unity, even the identity, of the Jews. They flourished on Mesopotamia's rich soil, they enjoyed considerable freedom of custom and worship, they grew rapidly in numbers and wealth, and prospered in the unwonted tranquillity and harmony which their subjection had brought to them. An ever-rising proportion of them accepted the gods of Babylon, and the epicurean ways of the old metropolis. When the second generation of exiles grew up, Jerusalem was almost forgotten.

It was the function of the unknown author who undertook to complete the Book of Isaiah to restate the religion of Israel for this backsliding generation; and it was his distinction, in restating it, to lift it to the loftiest plane that any religion had yet reached amid all the faiths of the Near East.\* While Buddha in India was preaching the death of desire, and Confucius in China was formulating wisdom for his people, this "Second Isaiah," in majestic and luminous prose, announced to the exiled Jews the first clear revelation of monotheism, and offered them a new god, infinitely richer in "lovingkindness" and tender mercy than the bitter Yahveh even of the First Isaiah. In words that a later gospel was to choose as spurring on the young Christ, this greatest of Prophets announced his mission—no longer to curse the people for their sins, but to bring them hope in their bondage. "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because the Lord hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the broken-hearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound."<sup>123</sup> For he has discovered that Yahveh is not a god of war and vengeance, but a loving father; the discovery fills him with happiness, and inspires him to magnificent songs. He predicts the coming of the new god to rescue his people:

The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill

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\* We know nothing of the history of this writer, who, by a literary device and license common to his time, chose to speak in the name of Isaiah. We merely guess that he wrote shortly before or after Cyrus liberated the Jews. Biblical scholarship assigns to him chapters xl-lv, and to another and later unknown, or unknowns, chapters lvi-lxvi.<sup>123a</sup>

shall be made low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain.\* . . . Behold, the Lord God will come with strong hand, and his arm shall rule for him. . . . He shall feed his flock like a shepherd; he shall gather the lambs with his arm, and carry them in his bosom and shall gently lead those that are with young.

The prophet then lifts the Messianic hope to a place among the ruling ideas of his people, and describes the "Servant" who will redeem Israel by vicarious sacrifice:

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; . . . he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we *did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted*. But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities; the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed. . . . The Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all.<sup>†124</sup>

Persia, the Second Isaiah predicts, will be the instrument of this liberation. Cyrus is invincible; he will take Babylon, and will free the Jews from their captivity. They will return to Jerusalem and build a new Temple, a new city, a very paradise: "the wolf and the lamb shall feed together, and the lion shall eat straw like a bullock; and dust shall be the serpent's meat. They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain, saith the Lord."<sup>125</sup> Perhaps it was the rise of Persia, and the spread of its power, subjecting all the states of the Near East in an imperial unity vaster and better governed than any social organization men had yet known, that suggested to the Prophet the conception of one universal deity. No longer does his god say, like the Yahveh of Moses, "I am the Lord thy God; . . . thou shalt not have strange gods before me"; now it is written: "I am the Lord, and there is none else, there is no god besides me."<sup>126</sup> The prophet-poet describes this universal deity in one of the great passages of the Bible:

Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with the span, and comprehended the dust of

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\* Referring, presumably, to the road from Babylon to Jerusalem.

† Modern research does not regard the "Servant" as the prophetic portrayal of Jesus.<sup>126a</sup>

the earth in a measure, and weighed the mountains in scales, and the hills in a balance? Behold, the nations are as a drop of a bucket, and are counted as the small dust of the balance; behold, he taketh up the isles as a very little thing. All nations before him are as nothing, and they are counted to him less than nothing, and vanity. To whom, then, will ye liken God, or what likeness will ye compare with him? It is he that sitteth upon the circle of the earth, and the inhabitants thereof are as grasshoppers; that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in. Lift up your eyes on high, and behold who hath created these things.<sup>187</sup>

It was a dramatic hour in the history of Israel when at last Cyrus entered Babylon as a world-conqueror, and gave to the exiled Jews full freedom to return to Jerusalem. He disappointed some of the Prophets, and showed his superior civilization, by leaving Babylon and its population unhurt, and offering a sceptical obeisance to its gods. He restored to the Jews what remained in the Babylonian treasury of the gold and silver taken by Nebuchadrezzar from the Temple, and instructed the communities in which the exiles lived to furnish them with funds for their long journey home. The younger Jews were not enthusiastic at this liberation; many of them had sunk strong roots into Babylonian soil, and hesitated to abandon their fertile fields and their flourishing trade for the desolate ruins of the Holy City. It was not until two years after Cyrus' coming that the first detachment of zealots set out on the long three months' journey back to the land which their fathers had left half a century before.<sup>188</sup>

They found themselves, then as now, not entirely welcome in their ancient home. For meanwhile other Semites had settled there, and had made the soil their own by occupation and toil; and these tribes looked with hatred upon the apparent invaders of what seemed to them their native fields. The returning Jews could not possibly have established themselves had it not been for the strong and friendly empire that protected them. The prince Zerubbabel won permission from the Persian king, Darius I, to rebuild the Temple; and though the immigrants were small in number and resources, and the work was hindered at every step by the attacks and conspiracies of a hostile population, it was carried to completion within some twenty-two years after the return. Slowly Jerusalem became again a Jewish city, and the Temple resounded with the psalms of



a rescued remnant resolved to make Judea strong again. It was a great triumph, surpassed only by that which we have seen in our own historic time.

#### VI. THE PEOPLE OF THE BOOK

*The "Book of the Law"—The composition of the Pentateuch—  
The myths of "Genesis"—The Mosaic Code—The Ten Com-  
mandments—The idea of God—The sabbath—The  
Jewish family—Estimate of the Mosaic legislation*

To build a military state was impossible, Judea had neither the numbers nor the wealth for such an enterprise. Since some system of order was needed that, while recognizing the sovereignty of Persia, would give the Jews a natural discipline and a national unity, the clergy undertook to provide a theocratic rule based, like Josiah's, on priestly traditions and laws promulgated as divine commands. About the year 444 B.C. Ezra, a learned priest, called the Jews together in solemn assembly, and read to them, from morn to midday, the "Book of the Law of Moses." For seven days he and his fellow Levites read from these scrolls; at the end the priests and the leaders of the people pledged themselves to accept this body of legislation as their constitution and their conscience, and to obey it forever.<sup>109</sup> From those troubled times till ours that Law has been the central fact in the life of the Jews; and their loyalty to it through all wanderings and tribulations has been one of the impressive phenomena of history.

What was this "Book of the Law of Moses"? Not quite the same as that "Book of the Covenant" which Josiah had read; for the latter had admitted of being completely read twice in a day, while the other needed a week.<sup>110</sup> We can only guess that the larger scroll constituted a substantial part of those first five books of the Old Testament which the Jews call *Torah* or the Law, and which others call the Pentateuch.<sup>111\*</sup> How, when, and where had these books been written? This is an innocent question which has caused the writing of fifty thousand volumes, and must here be left unanswered in a paragraph.

The consensus of scholarship is that the oldest elements in the Bible are those distinct and yet similar legends of *Genesis* which are called "J" and

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\* *Torah* is Hebrew for Direction, Guidance; *Pentateuch* is Greek for Five Rolls.

"E" respectively because one speaks of the Creator as Jehovah (Yahveh), while the other speaks of him as Elohim.\* It is believed that the Yahvist narrative was written in Judah, the Elohist in Ephraim, and that the two stories fused into one after the fall of Samaria. A third element, known as "D," and embodying the Deuteronomic Code, is probably by a distinct author or group of authors. A fourth element, "P," is composed of sections later inserted by the priests; this "Priestly Code" is probably the substance of the "Book of the Law" promulgated by Ezra.<sup>14</sup> The four compositions appear to have taken their present form about 300 B.C.<sup>15</sup>

These delightful tales of the Creation, the Temptation and the Flood were drawn from a storehouse of Mesopotamian legend as old as 3000 B.C.; we have seen some early forms of them in the course of this history. It is possible that the Jews appropriated some of these myths from Babylonian literature during the Captivity;<sup>16</sup> it is more likely that they had adopted them long before, from ancient Semitic and Sumerian sources common to all the Near East. The Persian and the Talmudic forms of the Creation myth represent God as first making a two-sexed being—a male and a female joined at the back like Siamese twins—and then dividing it as an after-thought. We are reminded of a strange sentence in Genesis (v, 2): "Male and female created he them, and blessed them, and called their name Adam": i.e., our first parent was originally both male and female—which seems to have escaped all theologians except Aristophanes.†

The legend of Paradise appears in almost all folklore—in Egypt, India, Tibet, Babylonia, Persia, Greece,‡ Polynesia, Mexico, etc.<sup>17</sup> Most of these Edens had forbidden trees, and were supplied with serpents or dragons that stole immortality from men, or otherwise poisoned Paradise.<sup>18</sup> Both the serpent and the fig were probably phallic symbols; behind the myth is the thought that sex and knowledge destroy innocence and happiness, and are the origin of evil; we shall find this same idea at the end of the Old Testament in *Ecclesiastes* as here at the beginning. In most of these stories

\* A distinction first pointed out by Jean Astruc in 1753. Passages generally ascribed to the "Yahvist" account. Gen. ii, 4 to iii, 24, iv, vi-viii, xi, 1-9, xii-xiii, xviii-xix, xxiv, xxvii, 1-45, xxxii, xliii-xliv; Exod. iv-v, viii, 20 to ix, 7, x-xi, xxxiii, 12 to xxxiv, 26; Numb. x, 29-36, xi, etc. Distinctly "Elohist" passages: Gen. xi, 10-32, xx, 1-17, xxi, 8-32, xxii, 1-14, xl-xlii, xlv; Exod. xviii, 20-23, xx-xxii, xxxiii, 7-11; Numb. xii, xxii-xxiv, etc.<sup>14</sup>

† Cf. Plato's *Symposium*.

‡ Cf. the Greek poet Hesiod (ca. 750 B.C.), in *Works and Days*: "Men lived like gods, without vices or passions, vexations or toil. In happy companionship with divine beings they passed their days in tranquillity and joy. . . . The earth was more beautiful then than now, and spontaneously yielded an abundant variety of fruits. . . . Men were considered mere boys at one hundred years old."<sup>17</sup>

woman was the lovely-evil agent of the serpent or the devil, whether as Eve, or Pandora, or the Poo See of Chinese legend. "All things," says the *Shi-ching*, "were at first subject to man, but a woman threw us into slavery. Our misery came not from heaven but from woman; she lost the human race. Ah, unhappy Poo See! Thou kindled the fire that consumes us, and which is every day increasing. . . . The world is lost. Vice overflows all things."

Even more universal was the story of the Flood; hardly an ancient people went without it, and hardly a mountain in Asia but had given perch to some water-wearied Noah or Shamash-napishtim.<sup>19</sup> Usually these legends were the popular vehicle or allegory of a philosophical judgment or a moral attitude summarizing long racial experience—that sex and knowledge bring more grief than joy, and that human life is periodically threatened by floods,—i.e., ruinous inundations of the great rivers whose waters made possible the earliest known civilizations. To ask whether these stories are true or false, whether they "really happened," would be to put a trivial and superficial question; their substance, of course, is not the tales they tell but the judgments they convey. Meanwhile it would be unwise not to enjoy their disarming simplicity, and the vivid swiftness of their narratives.

The books which Josiah and Ezra caused to be read to the people formulated that "Mosaic" Code on which all later Jewish life was to be built. Of this legislation the cautious Sarton writes: "Its importance in the history of institutions and of law cannot be overestimated."<sup>20</sup> It was the most thoroughgoing attempt in history to use religion as a basis of statesmanship, and as a regulator of every detail of life; the Law became, says Renan, "the tightest garment into which life was ever laced."<sup>21</sup> Diet,\* medicine, personal, menstrual and natal hygiene, public sanitation, sexual inversion and bestiality<sup>22</sup>—all are made subjects of divine ordinance and guidance; again we observe how slowly the doctor was differentiated from the priest<sup>23</sup>—to become in time his greatest enemy. Leviticus (xiii-xv) legislates carefully for the treatment of venereal disease, even to the most definite directions for segregation, disinfection, fumigation and, if necessary, the complete burning of the house in which the disease has run

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\*Cf. Deut. xiv. Reinach, Roberston Smith and Sir James Frazer have attributed the avoidance of pork not to hygienic knowledge and precaution but to the totemic worship of the pig (or wild boar) by the ancestors of the Jews.<sup>24</sup> The "worship" of the wild boar, however, may have been merely a priestly means of making it tabu in the sense of "unclean." The great number of wise hygienic rules in the Mosaic Code warrant a humble scepticism of Reinach's interpretation.

its course.<sup>154\*</sup> "The ancient Hebrews were the founders of prophylaxis,"<sup>155</sup> but they seem to have had no surgery beyond circumcision. This rite—common among ancient Egyptians and modern Semites—was not only a sacrifice to God and a compulsion to racial loyalty,† it was a hygienic precaution against sexual uncleanness.<sup>156</sup> Perhaps it was this Code of Cleanliness that helped to preserve the Jews through their long Odyssey of dispersion and suffering.

For the rest the Code centered about those Ten Commandments (Exodus, xx, 1-17) which were destined to receive the lip-service of half the world.‡ The first laid the foundation of the new theocratic community, which was to rest not upon any civil law, but upon the idea of God; he was the Invisible King who dictated every law and meted out every penalty; and his people were to be called *Israel*, as meaning the Defenders of God. The Hebrew state was dead, but the Temple remained; the priests of Judea, like the Popes of Rome, would try to restore what the kings had failed to save. Hence the explicitness and reiteration of the First Commandment: heresy or blasphemy must be punished with death, even if the heretic should be one's closest kin.<sup>157</sup> The priestly authors of the Code, like the pious Inquisitors, believed that religious unity was an indispensable condition of social organization and solidarity. It was this intolerance, and their racial pride, that embroiled and preserved the Jews.

The Second Commandment elevated the national conception of God at the expense of art: no graven images were ever to be made of him. It assumed a high intellectual level among the Jews, for it rejected superstition

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\* The procedure recommended by Leviticus (xiii-xiv) in cases of leprosy was practised in Europe to the end of the Middle Ages.<sup>155</sup>

† By making race ultimately unconcealable. "The Jewish rite," says Briffault, "did not assume its present form until so late a period as that of the Maccabees (167 B.C.). At that date it was still performed in such a manner that the jibes of Gentile women could be evaded, little trace of the operation being perceptible. The nationalistic priesthood therefore enacted that the prepuce should be completely removed."<sup>157</sup>

‡ It was the usual thing for ancient law-codes to be of divine origin. We have seen how the laws of Egypt were given it by the god Thoth, and how the sun-god Shamash begot Hammurabi's code. In like manner a deity gave to King Minos on Mt. Dicta the laws that were to govern Crete; the Greeks represented Dionysus, whom they also called "The Lawgiver," with two tables of stone on which laws were inscribed; and the pious Persians tell how, one day, as Zoroaster prayed on a high mountain, Ahura-Mazda appeared to him amid thunder and lightning, and delivered to him "The Book of the Law."<sup>158</sup> "They did all this," says Diodorus, "because they believed that a conception which would help humanity was marvelous and wholly divine; or because they held that the common crowd would be more likely to obey the laws if their gaze were directed towards the majesty and power of those to whom their laws were ascribed."<sup>159</sup>

and anthropomorphism, and—despite the all-too-human quality of the Pentateuch Yahveh—tried to conceive of God as beyond every form and image. It conscripted Hebrew devotion for religion, and left nothing, in ancient days, for science and art; even astronomy was neglected, lest corrupt diviners should multiply, or the stars be worshiped as divinities. In Solomon's Temple there had been an almost heathen abundance of imagery;<sup>101</sup> in the new Temple there was none. The old images had been carried off to Babylon, and apparently had not been returned along with utensils of silver and gold.<sup>102</sup> Hence we find no sculpture, painting or bas-relief after the Captivity, and very little before it except under the almost alien Solomon; architecture and music were the only arts that the priests would allow. Song and Temple ritual redeemed the life of the people from gloom; an orchestra of several instruments joined "as one to make one sound" with a great choir of voices to sing the psalms that glorified the Temple and its God.<sup>103</sup> "David and all the house of Israel played before the Lord on harps, psalteries, timbrels, cornets and cymbals."<sup>104</sup>

The Third Commandment typified the intense piety of the Jew. Not only would he not "take the name of the Lord God in vain"; he would never pronounce it; even when he came upon the name of Yahveh in his prayers he would substitute for it *Adonai*—Lord.\* Only the Hindus would rival this piety.

The Fourth Commandment sanctified the weekly day of rest as a Sabbath, and passed it down as one of the strongest institutions of mankind. The name, —and perhaps the custom—came from Babylon; *shabbattu* was applied by the Babylonians to "tabu" days of abstinence and propitiation.<sup>105</sup> Besides this weekly holyday there were great festivals—once Canaanite vegetation rites reminiscent of sowing and harvesting, and the cycles of moon and sun: *Mazzoth* originally celebrated the beginning of the barley harvest; *Shabuoth*, later called *Pentecost*, celebrated the end of the wheat harvest; *Sukkoth* commemorated the vintage; *Pesach*, or Passover, was the feast of the first fruits of the flock; *Rosh-ha-shanah* announced the New Year; only later were these festivals adapted to commemorate vital events in the history of the Jews.<sup>106</sup> On the first day of the Passover a lamb or kid was sacrificed and eaten, and its blood was sprinkled upon the doors as the portion of the god; later the priests attached this custom to the story of Yahveh's slaughter of the first-born of the Egyptians. The lamb was once a totem of a Canaanite clan; the

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\* In Hebrew *Yahveh* is written as *Jbhv*; this was erroneously translated into *Jehovah* because the vowels *a-o-a* had been placed over *Jbhv* in the original, to indicate that *Adonai* was to be pronounced in place of *Yahveh*; and the theologians of the Renaissance and the Reformation wrongly supposed that these vowels were to be placed between the consonants of *Jbhv*.<sup>107</sup>

Passover, among the Canaanites, was the oblation of a lamb to the local god.\* As we read (Exod., xi) the story of the establishment of the Passover rite, and see the Jews celebrating that same rite steadfastly today, we feel again the venerable antiquity of their worship, and the strength and tenacity of their race.

The Fifth Commandment sanctified the family, as second only to the Temple in the structure of Jewish society; the ideals then stamped upon the institution marked it throughout medieval and modern European history until our own disintegrative Industrial Revolution. The Hebrew patriarchal family was a vast economic and political organization, composed of the oldest married male, his wives, his unmarried children, his married sons with their wives and children, and perhaps some slaves. The economic basis of the institution was its convenience for cultivating the soil; its political value lay in its providing a system of social order so strong that it made the state—except in war—almost superfluous. The father's authority was practically unlimited; the land was his, and his children could survive only by obedience to him; he was the state. If he was poor he could sell his daughter, before her puberty, as a bondservant; and though occasionally he condescended to ask her consent, he had full right to dispose of her in marriage as he wished.<sup>100</sup> Boys were supposed to be products of the right testicle, girls of the left—which was believed to be smaller and weaker than the right.<sup>101</sup> At first marriage was matrilineal; the man had to "leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife" in her clan; but this custom gradually died out after the establishment of the monarchy. Yahveh's instructions to the wife were: "Thy desire shall be to thy husband, and he shall rule over thee." Though technically subject, the woman was often a person of high authority and dignity; the history of the Jews shines with such names as Sarah, Rachel, Miriam and Esther; Deborah was one of the judges of Israel,<sup>102</sup> and it was the prophetess Huldah whom Josiah consulted about the Book which the priests had found in the Temple.<sup>103</sup> The mother of many children was certain of security and honor. For the little nation longed to increase and multiply, feeling, as in Palestine today, its dangerous numerical inferiority to the peoples surrounding it; therefore it exalted motherhood, branded celibacy as a sin and a crime, made marriage compulsory after twenty, even in

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\* Later this gentle and ancient totem became the Paschal Lamb of Christianity, identified with the dead Christ.

priests, abhorred marriageable virgins and childless women, and looked upon abortion, infanticide and other means of limiting population as heathen abominations that stank in the nostrils of the Lord.<sup>171</sup> "And when Rachel saw that she bare Jacob no children, Rachel envied her sister; and said unto Jacob, Give me children, or else I die."<sup>172</sup> The perfect wife was one who labored constantly in and about her home, and had no thought except in her husband and her children. The last chapter of Proverbs states the male ideal of woman completely:

Who can find a virtuous woman? For her price is far above rubies. The heart of her husband doth safely trust in her, so that he shall have no need of spoil. She will do him good and not evil all the days of her life. She seeketh wool, and flax, and worketh willingly with her hands. She is like the merchants' ships; she bringeth her food from afar. She riseth also while it is yet night, and giveth meat to her household, and a portion to her maidens. She considereth a field, and buyeth it; with the fruit of her hands she planteth a vineyard. She girdeth her loins with strength, and strengtheneth her arms. She perceiveth that her merchandise is good; her candle goeth not out by night. She layeth her hands to the spindle, and her hands hold the distaff. She stretcheth out her hand to the poor; yea, she reacheth forth her hands to the needy. . . . She maketh herself coverings of tapestry; her clothing is silk and purple. Her husband is known in the gates, when he sitteth among the elders of the land. She maketh fine linen, and selleth it; and delivereth girdles unto the merchant. Strength and honor are her clothing; and she shall rejoice in time to come. She openeth her mouth with wisdom, and in her tongue is the law of kindness. She looketh well to the ways of her household, and eateth not the bread of idleness. Her children arise up and call her blessed; her husband also, and he praiseth her. . . . Give her of the fruit of her hands; and let her own works praise her in the gates.\*

The Sixth Commandment was a counsel of perfection; nowhere is there so much killing as in the Old Testament; its chapters oscillate be-

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\* This, of course, was the man's ideal; if we may believe Isaiah (iii, 16-23), the real women of Jerusalem were very much of this world, loving fine raiment and ornament, and leading the men a merry chase. "The daughters of Zion are haughty, and walk with stretched forth necks and wanton eyes, . . . mincing as they go, and making a tinkling with their feet," etc. Perhaps the historians have always deceived us about women?

tween slaughter and compensatory reproduction. Tribal quarrels, internal factions and hereditary vendettas broke the monotony of intermittent peace.<sup>176</sup> Despite a magnificent verse about ploughshares and pruning-hooks, the Prophets were not pacifists, and the priests—if we may judge from the speeches which they put into the mouth of Yahveh—were almost as fond of war as of preaching. Among nineteen kings of Israel eight were assassinated.<sup>177</sup> Captured cities were usually destroyed, the males put to the sword, and the soil deliberately ruined—in the fashion of the times.<sup>178</sup> Perhaps the figures exaggerate the killing; it is unbelievable that, entirely without modern inventions, “the children of Israel slew of the Syrians one hundred thousand footmen in one day.”<sup>179</sup> Belief in themselves as the chosen people<sup>180</sup> intensified the pride natural in a nation conscious of superior abilities; it accentuated their disposition to segregate themselves maritally and mentally from other peoples, and deprived them of the international perspective that their descendants were to attain. But they had in high degree the virtues of their qualities. Their violence came of unmanageable vitality, their separatism came of their piety, their quarrelsomeness and querulousness came of a passionate sensitivity that produced the greatest literature of the Near East; their racial pride was the indispensable prop of their courage through centuries of suffering. Men are what they have had to be.

The Seventh Commandment recognized marriage as the basis of the family, as the Fifth had recognized the family as the basis of society; and it offered to marriage all the support of religion. It said nothing about sex relations before marriage, but other regulations laid upon the bride the obligation, under pain of death by stoning, to prove her virginity on the day of her marriage.<sup>181</sup> Nevertheless prostitution was common and pederasty apparently survived the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah.<sup>182</sup> As the Law did not seem to prohibit relations with foreign harlots, Syrian, Moabite, Midianite and other “strange women” flourished along the highways, where they lived in booths and tents, and combined the trades of peddler and prostitute. Solomon, who had no violent prejudices in these matters, relaxed the laws that had kept such women out of Jerusalem; in time they multiplied so rapidly there that in the days of the Maccabees the Temple itself was described by an indignant reformer as full of fornication and harlotry.<sup>183</sup>

Love affairs probably occurred, for there was much tenderness between



the sexes; "Jacob served seven years for Rachel, and they seemed unto him but a few days for the love he had to her."<sup>184</sup> But love played a very small rôle in the choice of mates. Before the Exile marriage was completely secular, arranged by the parents, or by the suitor with the parents of the bride. Vestiges of capture-marriage are found in the Old Testament; Yahveh approves of it in war;<sup>185</sup> and the elders, on the occasion of a shortage of women, "commanded the children of Benjamin, saying, Go and lie in wait in the vineyards; and see and behold if the daughters of Shiloh come out to dance in dances; then come ye out of the vineyards, and catch you every man his wife of the daughters of Shiloh, and go to the land of Benjamin."<sup>186</sup> But this was exceptional; usually the marriage was by purchase; Jacob purchased Leah and Rachel by his toil, the gentle Ruth was quite simply bought by Boaz, and the prophet Hosea regretted exceedingly that he had given fifty shekels for his wife.<sup>187</sup> The word for wife, *beulah*, meant owned.<sup>187a</sup> The father of the bride reciprocated by giving his daughter a dowry—an institution admirably adapted to diminish the socially disruptive gap between the sexual and the economic maturity of children in an urban civilization.

If the man was well-to-do, he might practise polygamy; if the wife was barren, like Sarah, she might encourage her husband to take a concubine. The purpose of these arrangements was prolific reproduction; it was taken as a matter of course that after Rachel and Leah had given Jacob all the children they were capable of bearing, they should offer him their maids, who would also bear him children.<sup>188</sup> A woman was not allowed to remain idle in this matter of reproduction; if a husband died, his brother, however many wives he might already have, was obliged to marry her; or, if the husband had no brother, the obligation fell upon his nearest surviving male kin.<sup>189</sup> Since private property was the core of Jewish economy, the double standard prevailed: the man might have many wives, but the woman was confined to one man. Adultery meant relations with a woman who had been bought and paid for by another man; it was a violation of the law of property, and was punished with death for both parties.<sup>190</sup> Fornication was forbidden to women, but was looked upon as a venial offense in men.<sup>191</sup> Divorce was free to the man, but extremely difficult for the woman, until Talmudic days.<sup>192</sup> The husband does not seem to have abused his privileges unduly; he is pictured to us, all in all, as zealously devoted to his wife and his children. And though

love did not determine marriage, it often flowered out of it. "Isaac took Rebbecca, and she became his wife; and he loved her; and Isaac was comforted after his mother's death."<sup>196</sup> Probably in no other people outside of the Far East has family life reached so high a level as among the Jews.

The Eighth Commandment sanctified private property,\* and bound it up with religion and the family as one of the three bases of Hebrew society. Property was almost entirely in land; until the days of Solomon there was little industry beyond that of the potter and the smith. Even agriculture was not completely developed; the bulk of the population devoted itself to rearing sheep and cattle, and tending the vine, the olive and the fig. They lived in tents rather than houses, in order to move more easily to fresh pastures. In time their growing economic surplus generated trade, and the Jewish merchants, by their tenacity and their skill, began to flourish in Damascus, Tyre and Sidon, and in the precincts of the Temple itself. There was no coinage till near the time of the Captivity, but gold and silver, weighed in each transaction, became a medium of exchange, and bankers appeared in great numbers to finance commerce and enterprise. It was nothing strange that these "money-lenders" should use the courts of the Temple; it was a custom general in the Near East, and survives there in many places to this day.<sup>198</sup> Yahveh beamed upon the growing power of the Hebrew financiers; "thou shalt lend unto many nations," he said, "but thou shalt not borrow"<sup>197</sup>—a generous philosophy that has made great fortunes, though it has not seemed, in our century, to be divinely inspired.

As in the other countries of the Near East, war captives and convicts were used as slaves, and hundreds of thousands of them toiled in cutting timber and transporting materials for such public works as Solomon's Temple and palace. But the owner had no power of life and death over his slaves, and the slave might acquire property and buy his liberty.<sup>198</sup> Men could be sold as bondservants for unpaid debts, or could sell their children in their place; and this continued to the days of Christ.<sup>199</sup> These typical institutions of the Near East were mitigated in Judea by generous charity, and a vigorous campaign, by priest and prophet, against exploitation. The Code laid it down hopefully that "ye shall not oppress one another";<sup>200</sup> it asked that Hebrew bondservants should be released, and debts among Jews canceled, every seventh year;<sup>201</sup> and when this was found too idealistic for the masters, the Law proclaimed the institution of the Jubilee, by which, every fifty years, all slaves and debtors should be freed. "And ye shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty

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\* Theoretically the land belonged to Yahveh.<sup>195</sup>

throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a Jubilee unto you; and ye shall return every man unto his possession, and ye shall return every man unto his family."<sup>202</sup>

We have no evidence that this fine edict was obeyed, but we must give credit to the priests for leaving no lesson in charity untaught. "If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren, . . . thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need"; and "take thou no usury" (i.e., interest) "of him."<sup>203</sup> The Sabbath rest was to be extended to every employee, even to animals; stray sheaves and fruits were to be left in the fields and orchards for the poor to glean.<sup>204</sup> And though these charities were largely for fellow Jews, "the stranger in the gates" was also to be treated with kindness; the sojourner was to be sheltered and fed, and dealt with honorably. At all times the Jews were bidden to remember that they, too, had once been homeless, even bondservants, in a foreign land.

The Ninth Commandment, by demanding absolute honesty of witnesses, put the prop of religion under the whole structure of Jewish law. An oath was to be a religious ceremony: not merely was a man, in swearing, to place his hand on the genitals of him to whom he swore, as in the old custom;<sup>205</sup> he was now to be taking God himself as his witness and his judge. False witnesses, according to the Code, were to receive the same punishment that their testimony had sought to bring upon their victims.<sup>206</sup> Religious law was the sole law of Israel; the priests and the temples were the judges and the courts; and those who refused to accept the decision of the priests were to be put to death.<sup>207</sup> Ordeal by the drinking of poisonous water was prescribed in certain cases of doubtful guilt.<sup>208</sup> There was no other than religious machinery for enforcing the law; it had to be left to personal conscience, and public opinion. Minor crimes might be atoned for by confession and compensation.<sup>209</sup> Capital punishment was decreed, by Yahveh's instructions, for murder, kidnaping, idolatry, adultery, striking or cursing a parent, stealing a slave, or "lying with a beast," but not for the killing of a servant;<sup>210</sup> and "thou shalt not suffer a witch to live."<sup>211</sup> Yahveh was quite satisfied to have the individual take the law into his own hands in case of murder: "The revenger of blood, himself shall slay the murderer; when he meeteth him, he shall slay him."<sup>212</sup> Certain cities, however, were to be set apart, to which a criminal might flee, and in which the avenger must stay his revenge.<sup>213</sup> In general the principle of punishment was the *lex talionis*: "life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot, burning for burning, stripe for stripe"<sup>214</sup>—we trust that this was a counsel of perfection, never quite realized. The Mosaic Code, though *written down* at least fifteen hundred years later, shows no advance, in criminal legislation, upon the Code of Hammurabi; in legal organization it shows an archaic retrogression to primitive ecclesiastical control.

The Tenth Commandment reveals how clearly woman was conceived under the rubric of property. "Thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's house, thou shalt not covet thy neighbor's wife, nor his manservant, nor his maid-servant, nor his ox, nor his ass, nor anything that is thy neighbor's."<sup>226</sup> Nevertheless, it was an admirable precept; could men follow it, half the fever and anxiety of our life would be removed. Strange to say, the greatest of the commandments is not listed among the Ten, though it is part of the "Law." It occurs in Leviticus, xix, 18, lost amid "a repetition of sundry laws," and reads very simply: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself."

In general it was a lofty code, sharing its defects with its age, and rising to virtues characteristically its own. We must remember that it was only a law—indeed, only a "priestly Utopia"<sup>227</sup>—rather than a description of Jewish life; like other codes, it was honored plentifully in the breach, and won new praise with every violation. But its influence upon the conduct of the people was at least as great as that of most legal or moral codes. It gave to the Jews, through the two thousand years of wandering which they were soon to begin, a "portable Fatherland," as Heine was to call it, an intangible and spiritual state; it kept them united despite every dispersion, proud despite every defeat, and brought them across the centuries to our own time, a strong and apparently indestructible people.

#### VII. THE LITERATURE AND PHILOSOPHY OF THE BIBLE

*History—Fiction—Poetry—The Psalms—The Song of Songs—  
Proverbs—Job—The idea of immortality—The pessimism of  
Ecclesiastes—The advent of Alexander*

The Old Testament is not only law; it is history, poetry and philosophy of the highest order. After making every deduction for primitive legend and pious fraud, after admitting that the historical books are not quite as accurate or as ancient as our forefathers supposed, we find in them, nevertheless, not merely some of the oldest historical writing known to us, but some of the best. The books of Judges, Samuel and Kings may, as some scholars believe,<sup>228</sup> have been put together hastily during or shortly after the Exile to collect and preserve the national traditions of a scattered and broken people; nevertheless the stories of Saul, David and Solomon are immeasurably finer in structure and style than the other historical writing of the ancient Near East. Even Genesis, if we read it with some understanding of the function of legend, is (barring its genealogies)

an admirable story, told without frill or ornament, with simplicity, vividness and force. And in a sense we have here not mere history, but philosophy of history; this is the first recorded effort of man to reduce the multiplicity of past events to a measure of unity by seeking in them some pervading purpose and significance, some law of sequence and causation, some illumination for the present and the future. The conception of history promulgated by the Prophets and the priestly authors of the Pentateuch survived a thousand years of Greece and Rome to become the world-view of European thinkers from Boëthius to Bossuet.

Midway between the history and the poetry are the fascinating romances of the Bible. There is nothing more perfect in the realm of prose than the story of Ruth; only less excellent are the tales of Isaac and Rebecca, Jacob and Rachel, Joseph and Benjamin, Samson and Delilah, Esther, Judith and Daniel. The poetical literature begins with the "Song of Moses" (Exod. xv) and the "Song of Deborah" (Judges v), and reaches finally to the heights of the Psalms. The "penitential" hymns of the Babylonians had prepared for these, and perhaps had given them material as well as form; Ikhnaton's ode to the sun seems to have contributed to Psalm CIV; and the majority of the Psalms, instead of being the impressively united work of David, are probably the compositions of several poets writing long after the Captivity, probably in the third century before Christ.<sup>88</sup> But all this is as irrelevant as the name or sources of Shakespeare; what matters is that the Psalms are at the head of the world's lyric poetry. They were not meant to be read at a sitting, or in a Higher Critic's mood; they are at their best as expressing moments of pious ecstasy and stimulating faith. They are marred for us by bitter imprecations, tiresome "groanings" and complaints, and endless adulation of a Yahveh who, with all his "lovingkindness," "longsuffering" and "compassion," pours "smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth" (VIII), promises that "the wicked shall be turned into hell" (IX), laps up flattery,\* and threatens to "cut off all flattering lips" (XII). The Psalms are full of military ardor, hardly Christian, but very Pilgrim. Some of them, however, are jewels of tenderness, or cameos of humility. "Verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. . . . As for man, his days are as grass; as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more"

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\**Psalms* is a Greek word, meaning "song of praise."

(XXIX, CIII). In these songs we feel the antistrophic rhythm of ancient Oriental poetry, and almost hear the voices of majestic choirs in alternate answering. No poetry has ever excelled this in revealing metaphor or living imagery; never has religious feeling been more intensely or vividly expressed. These poems touch us more deeply than any lyric of love; they move even the sceptical soul, for they give passionate form to the final longing of the developed mind—for some perfection to which it may dedicate its striving. Here and there, in the King James' Version, are pithy phrases that have become almost words in our language—"out of the mouths of babes" (VIII), "the apple of the eye" (XVII), "put not your trust in princes" (CXLVI); and everywhere, in the original, are similes that have never been surpassed: "The rising sun is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race" (XIX). We can only imagine what majesty and beauty must clothe these songs in the sonorous language of their origin.\*

When, beside these Psalms, we place in contrast the "Song of Solomon," we get a glimpse of that sensual and terrestrial element in Jewish life which the Old Testament, written almost entirely by prophets and priests, has perhaps concealed from us—just as Ecclesiastes reveals a scepticism not otherwise discernible in the carefully selected and edited literature of the ancient Jews. This strangely amorous composition is an open field for surmise: it may be a collection of songs of Babylonian origin, celebrating the love of Ishtar and Tammuz; it may be (since it contains words borrowed from the Greek) the work of several Hebrew Anacreons touched by the Hellenistic spirit that entered Judea with Alexander; or (since the lovers address each other as brother and sister in the Egyptian manner) it may be a flower of Alexandrian Jewry, plucked by some quite emancipated soul from the banks of the Nile. In any case its presence in the Bible is a charming mystery: by what winking—or hoodwinking—of the theologians did these songs of lusty passion find room between Isaiah and the Preacher?

A bundle of myrrh is my well-beloved unto me; he shall lie all night  
betwixt my breasts.

My beloved is unto me as a cluster of camphire in the vineyards of  
Engedi.

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\* A selection of the best Psalms would probably include VIII, XXIII, LI, CIV, CXXXVII and CXXXIX. The last is strangely like Whitman's poem to evolution.<sup>29</sup>

Behold, thou art fair, my love; behold, thou art fair; thou hast dove's eyes.

Behold, thou art fair, my beloved, yea, pleasant; also our bed is green. . . .

I am the rose of Sharon, and the lily of the valleys. . . .

Stay me with flagons, comfort me with apples, for I am sick of love. . . .

I charge you, O ye daughters of Jerusalem, by the roes, or by the hinds of the field, that ye stir not up, nor awake my love, till he please. . . .

My beloved is mine, and I am his; he feedeth among the lilies.

Until the day break, and the shadows flee away, turn, my beloved, and be thou like a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of Bether. . . .

Come, my beloved, let us go forth into the field, let us lodge in the villages.

Let us get up early to the vineyards; let us see if the vine flourish, whether the tender grape appear, and the pomegranates bud forth; there will I give thee my loves.<sup>200</sup>

This is the voice of youth, and that of the Proverbs is the voice of old age. Men look to love and life for everything; they receive a little less than that; they imagine that they have received nothing: these are the three stages of the pessimist. So this legendary Solomon\* warns youth against the evil woman, "for she hath cast down many wounded; yea, many strong men have been slain by her. . . . Whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacketh understanding. . . . There be three things which are wonderful to me; yea, four which I know not: the way of an eagle in the air, the way of a serpent upon a rock, the way of a ship in the midst of the sea, and the way of a man with a maid."<sup>201</sup> He agrees with St. Paul that it is better to marry than to burn. "Rejoice with the wife of thy youth. Let her be as the loving hind and the pleasant roe; let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be thou ravished always with her love. . . . Better is a dinner of herbs where love is, than a stalled ox with hatred therewith."<sup>202</sup> Can these be the words of the husband of seven hundred wives?

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\* The Proverbs, of course, are not the work of Solomon, though several of them may have come from him; they owe something to Egyptian literature and Greek philosophy, and were probably put together in the third or second century B.C. by some Hellenized Alexandrian Jew.

Next to unchastity, in the way from wisdom, is sloth: "Go to the ant, thou sluggard. . . . How long wilt thou sleep, O sluggard?"<sup>1923</sup> "Seest thou a man diligent in his business?—he shall stand before kings."<sup>1924</sup> Yet will the Philosopher not brook crass ambition. "He that maketh haste to be rich shall not be innocent"; and "the prosperity of fools shall destroy them."<sup>1925</sup> Work is wisdom, words are mere folly. "In all labor there is profit, but the talk of the lips tendeth only to penury. . . . A fool uttereth all his mind, but a wise man keepeth it in till afterwards; . . . even a fool, when he holdeth his peace, is counted wise."<sup>1926</sup> The lesson which the Sage never tires of repeating is an almost Socratic identification of virtue and wisdom, redolent of those schools of Alexandria in which Hebrew theology was mating with Greek philosophy to form the intellect of Europe. "Understanding is a well-spring of life unto him that hath it; but the instruction of fools is folly. . . . Happy is the man that findeth wisdom, and the man that getteth understanding; for the merchandise of it is better than the merchandise of silver, and the gain thereof than fine gold. She is more precious than rubies; and all things thou canst desire are not to be compared with her. Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honor. Her ways are ways of pleasantness, and all her paths are peace."<sup>1927</sup>

Job is earlier than Proverbs; perhaps it was written during the Exile, and described by allegory the captives of Babylon.\* "I call it," says the perfervid Carlyle, "one of the grandest things ever written with a pen. . . . A noble book; all men's book! It is our first, oldest statement of the never-ending problem—man's destiny, and God's ways with him here on this earth. . . . There is nothing written, I think, in the Bible or out of it, of equal literary merit."<sup>1928</sup> The problem arose out of the Hebrew emphasis on this world. Since there was no Heaven in ancient Jewish theology,<sup>1929</sup> virtue had to be rewarded here or never. But often it seemed that only the wicked prospered, and that the choicest sufferings are reserved for the good man. Why, as the Psalmist complained, did the "ungodly prosper in the world?"<sup>1930</sup> Why did God hide himself, instead of

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\* Scholarship assigns it tentatively to the fifth century B.C.<sup>1928</sup> Its text is corrupt beyond even the custom of sacred scriptures everywhere. Jastrow accepts only chapters iii-xxxi, considers the rest to be edifying emendations, and suspects many interpolations and mistranslations in the accepted chapters. E.g., "Though he slay me, yet will I trust in him" (xiii, 5) should be, "Yet I tremble not," or "Yet I have no hope."<sup>1929</sup> Kallen and others have found in the book the likeness of a Greek tragedy, written on the model of Euripides.<sup>1930</sup> Chapters iii-xli are cast in the typical antistrophic form of Hebrew poetry.



punishing the evil and rewarding the good?" The author of *Job* now asked the same questions more resolutely, and offered his hero, perhaps, as a symbol for his people. All Israel had worshiped Yahveh (fitfully), as Job had done; Babylon had ignored and blasphemed Yahveh; and yet Babylon flourished, and Israel ate the dust and wore the sackcloth of desolation and captivity. What could one say of such a god?

In a prologue in heaven, which some clever scribe may have inserted to take the scandal out of the book, Satan suggests to Yahveh that Job is "perfect and upright" only because he is fortunate; would he retain his piety in adversity? Yahveh permits Satan to heap a variety of calamities upon Job's head. For a time the hero is as patient as Job; but at last his fortitude breaks, he ponders suicide, and bitterly reproaches his god for forsaking him. Zophar, who has come out to enjoy the sufferings of his friend, insists that God is just, and will yet reward the good man, even on earth; but Job shuts him up sharply:

No doubt but ye are the people, and wisdom shall die with you. But I have understanding as well as you; . . . yea, who knoweth not these things? . . . The tabernacles of robbers prosper, and they that provoke God are secure; into whose hand God bringeth abundantly.

. . . . Lo, mine eye hath seen all this, mine ear hath heard and understood it. . . . But ye are forgers of lies, ye are all physicians of no value. Oh, that ye would altogether hold your peace! and it should be your wisdom.<sup>201</sup>

He reflects on the brevity of life, and the length of death:

Man that is born of woman is of few days, and full of trouble. He cometh forth like a flower, and is cut down; he fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not. . . . For there is hope of a tree, if it be cut down, that it will sprout again, and that the tender branch thereof will not cease. . . . But man dieth, and wasteth away; yea, man giveth up the ghost, and where is he? As the waters fall from the sea, and the flood decayeth and drieth up, so man lieth down, and riseth not. . . . If a man die, shall he live again?<sup>202</sup>

The debate continues vigorously, and Job becomes more and more sceptical of his God, until he calls him "Adversary," and wishes that this Adversary would destroy himself by writing a book<sup>203</sup>—perhaps some

Leibnitzian theodicy. The concluding words of this chapter—"The words of Job are ended"—suggest that this was the original termination of a discourse which, like that of Ecclesiastes, represented a strong heretical minority among the Jews.\* But a fresh philosopher enters at this point—Elihu—who demonstrates, in one hundred and sixty-five verses, the justice of God's ways with men. Finally, in one of the most majestic passages in the Bible, a voice comes down out of the clouds:

Then the Lord answered Job out of the whirlwind, and said:

Who is this that darkeneth counsel by words without knowledge? Gird up now thy loins like a man; for I will demand of thee, and answer thou me. Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? declare, if thou hast understanding. Who hath laid the measures thereof, if thou knowest? or who hath stretched his line upon it? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened? or who laid the cornerstone thereof; when the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy? Or who shut up the sea with doors, when it brake forth, as if it had issued out of the womb? When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it, and brake up for it my decreed place, and set bars and doors, and said, Hitherto shalt thou come, but no further; and here shall thy proud waves be stayed? Hast thou commanded the morning since thy days; and caused the dayspring to know his place? . . . Hast thou entered into the springs of the sea? or hast thou walked in the search of the depth? Have the gates of death been opened unto thee? or hast thou seen the doors of the shadow of death? Hast thou perceived the breath of the earth? declare if thou knowest it all. . . . Hast thou entered into the treasures of the snow? or hast thou seen the treasures of the hail? . . . Canst thou bind the sweet influences of the Pleiades, or loose the bands of Orion? . . . Knowest thou the ordinances of heaven? canst thou set the dominion thereof in the earth? . . . Who hath put wisdom in the inward parts, or who hath given understanding to the heart? . . .

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\* "The sceptic," wrote that prolific sceptic, Renan, "writes little, and there are many chances that his writings will be lost. The destiny of the Jewish people having been exclusively religious, the secular part of its literature had to be sacrificed."<sup>200</sup> The repetition of "The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God" in the Psalms (XIV, 1; LIII, 1), indicates that such fools were sufficiently numerous to create some stir in Israel. There is apparently a reference to this minority in Zephaniah, i, 12.

Shall he that contendeth with the Almighty instruct him? He that reproveth God, let him answer it.<sup>277</sup>

Job humbles himself in terror before this apparition. Yahveh, appeased, forgives him, accepts his sacrifice, denounces Job's friends for their feeble arguments,<sup>278</sup> and gives Job fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, a thousand she-asses, seven sons, three daughters, and one hundred and forty years. It is a lame but happy ending; Job receives everything but an answer to his questions. The problem remained; and it was to have profound effects upon later Jewish thought. In the days of Daniel (ca. 167 B.C.) it was to be abandoned as insoluble in terms of this world; no answer could be given—Daniel and Enoch (and Kant) would say—unless one believed in some other life, beyond the grave, in which all wrongs would be righted, the wicked would be punished, and the just would inherit infinite reward. This was one of the varied currents of thought that flowed into Christianity, and carried it to victory.

In Ecclesiastes\* the problem is given a pessimistic reply; prosperity and misfortune have nothing to do with virtue and vice.

All things have I seen in the days of my vanity: there is a just man that perisheth in his righteousness, and there is a wicked man that longeth his life in his wickedness. . . . So I returned, and considered all the oppressions that are done under the sun: and beheld the tears of such as were oppressed, and they had no comforter; and on the side of their oppressors there was power. . . . If thou seest the oppression of the poor, and violent perverting of judgment and justice in a province, marvel not at the matter, . . . for there be higher than they.<sup>281</sup>

It is not virtue and vice that determine a man's lot, but blind and merciless chance. "I saw under the sun that the race is not to the swift, nor the battle to the strong, neither yet bread to the wise, nor yet riches to men of understanding, nor yet favor to men of skill; but time and chance happeneth to them all."<sup>282</sup> Even wealth is insecure, and does not long bring happiness. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied with silver; nor he that loveth abundance, with increase: this is also vanity. . . . The

\* The authorship and date of the book are quite unknown. Sarton attributes it to the period between 250 and 168 B.C.<sup>280</sup> The author calls himself, by a confusing literary fiction, both "Koheleth" and "the son of David, king in Jerusalem"—i.e., Solomon.<sup>280</sup>

sleep of a laboring man is sweet, whether he eat little or much; but the abundance of the rich will not suffer him to sleep."<sup>114</sup> Remembering his relatives, he formulates Malthus in a line: "When goods are increased, they are increased that eat them."<sup>124</sup> Nor can he be soothed by any legend of a Golden Past, or a Utopia to come: things have always been as they are now, and so they will always be. "Say not thou, What is the cause that the former days were better than these? for thou dost not inquire wisely concerning this";<sup>125</sup> one must choose his historians carefully. And "the thing that hath been, it is that which shall be; and that which is done is that which shall be done; and there is nothing new under the sun. Is there anything whereof it may be said, See, this is new? It hath been already of old time, which was before us."<sup>126</sup> Progress, he thinks, is a delusion; civilizations have been forgotten, and will be again.<sup>127</sup>

In general he feels that life is a sorry business, and might well be dispensed with; it is aimless and circuitous motion without permanent result, and ends where it began; it is a futile struggle, in which nothing is certain except defeat.

Vanity of vanities, saith the Preacher, vanity of vanities; all is vanity. What profit hath a man of all his labor which he taketh under the sun? One generation passeth away, and another generation cometh; but the earth abideth forever. The sun also ariseth, and the wind goeth toward the south, and turneth about unto the north; it whirleth about continually, and the wind returneth again according to his circuits. All the rivers run into the sea, yet the sea is not full; unto the place from whence the rivers came, thither they return again. . . . Wherefore I praised the dead which are already dead, more than the living which are yet alive. Yea, better is he, than both they, which hath not yet been, who hath not seen the evil work that is done under the sun. . . . A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth.<sup>128</sup>

For a time he seeks the answer to the riddle of life in abandonment to pleasure. "Then I commended mirth, because a man hath no better thing under the sun than to eat, and to drink, and to be merry." But "behold, this also is vanity."<sup>129</sup> The difficulty with pleasure is woman, from whom the Preacher seems to have received some unforgettable sting. "One man among a thousand have I found; but a woman among all those

have I not found. . . . I find more bitter than death the woman whose heart is snares and nets, and her hands as bands; whoso pleaseth God shall escape her."<sup>231</sup> He concludes his digression into this most obscure realm of philosophy by reverting to the advice of Solomon and Voltaire, who did not practise it: "Live joyfully with the wife whom thou lovest, all the days of the life of thy vanity which God hath given thee under the sun."<sup>232</sup>

Even wisdom is a questionable thing; he lauds it generously, but he suspects that anything more than a little knowledge is a dangerous thing. "Of making many books," he writes, with uncanny foresight, "there is no end; and much study is a weariness of the flesh."<sup>233</sup> It might be wise to seek wisdom if God had given it a better income; "wisdom is good, with an inheritance"; otherwise it is a snare, and is apt to destroy its lovers.<sup>234</sup> (Truth is like Yahveh, who said to Moses: "Thou canst not see my face; for there shall no man see me and live."<sup>235</sup>) In the end the wise man dies as thoroughly as the fool, and both come to the same odor.

And I gave my heart to seek and search out by wisdom concerning all things that are done under heaven: this sore travail hath God given to the sons of man to be exercised therewith. I have seen all the works that are done under the sun; and behold, all is vanity and a chasing after the wind. . . . I communed with mine own heart, saying, Lo, I am come to great estate, and have gotten more wisdom than all they that have been before me in Jerusalem; yea, my heart had great experience of wisdom and knowledge. And I gave my heart to know wisdom, and to know madness and folly; I perceived that this also is a chasing after the wind. For in much wisdom is much grief; and he that increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow.<sup>236</sup>

All these darts of outrageous fortune might be borne with hope and courage if the just man could look forward to some happiness beyond the grave. But that, too, Ecclesiastes feels, is a myth; man is an animal, and dies like any other beast.

For that which befalleth the sons of men befalleth beasts; even one thing befalleth them; as the one dieth, so dieth the other; yea, they have all one breath; so that a man hath no preëminence over a beast; for all is vanity. All go unto one place: all are of the dust,

and all turn to dust again. . . . Wherefore I perceive that there is nothing better than that a man should rejoice in his own works; for that is his portion; for who shall bring him to see what shall be after him? . . . Whatsoever thy hand findeth to do, do it with thy might, for there is no work, nor device, nor knowledge, nor wisdom in the grave, whither thou goest.<sup>207</sup>

What a commentary on the wisdom so lauded in the Proverbs! Here, evidently, civilization had for a time gone to seed. The vitality of Israel's youth had been exhausted by her struggles against the empires that surrounded her. The Yahveh in whom she had trusted had not come to her aid; and in her desolation and dispersion she raised to the skies this bitterest of all voices in literature to express the profoundest doubts that ever come to the human soul.

Jerusalem had been restored, but not as the citadel of an unconquerable god; it was a vassal city ruled now by Persia, now by Greece. In 334 B.C. the young Alexander stood at its gates, and demanded the surrender of the capital. The high-priest at first refused; but the next morning, having had a dream, he consented. He ordered the clergy to put on their most impressive vestments, and the people to garb themselves in immaculate white; then he led the population pacifically out through the gates to solicit peace. Alexander bowed to the high-priest, expressed his admiration for the people and their god, and accepted Jerusalem.<sup>218</sup>

It was not the end of Judea. Only the first act had been played in this strange drama that binds forty centuries. Christ would be the second, Ahasuerus the third; today another act is played, but it is not the last. Destroyed and rebuilt, destroyed and rebuilt, Jerusalem rises again, symbol of the vitality and pertinacity of an heroic race. The Jews, who are as old as history, may be as lasting as civilization.

# Persia

## I. THE RISE AND FALL OF THE MEDES

### *Their origins—Rulers—The blood treaty of Sardis—Degeneration*

WHO were the Medes that had played so vital a rôle in the destruction of Assyria? Their origin, of course, eludes us; history is a book that one must begin in the middle. The first mention we have of them is on a tablet recording the expedition of Shalmaneser III into a country called *Parsua*, in the mountains of Kurdistan (837 B.C.); there, it seems, twenty-seven chieftain-kings ruled over twenty-seven states thinly populated by a people called Amadai, Madai, Medes. As Indo-Europeans they had probably come into western Asia about a thousand years before Christ, from the shores of the Caspian Sea. The *Zend-Avesta*, sacred scriptures of the Persians, idealized the racial memory of this ancient home-land, and described it as a paradise: the scenes of our youth, like the past, are always beautiful if we do not have to live in them again. The Medes appear to have wandered through the region of Bokhara and Samarkand, and to have migrated farther and farther south, at last reaching Persia.<sup>1</sup> They found copper, iron, lead, gold and silver, marble and precious stones, in the mountains in which they made their new home;<sup>2</sup> and being a simple and vigorous people they developed a prosperous agriculture on the plains and the slopes of the hills.

At Ecbatana\*—i.e., "a meeting-place of many ways"—in a picturesque valley made fertile by the melting snows of the highlands, their first king, Deioces, founded their first capital, adorning and dominating it with a royal palace spread over an area two-thirds of a mile square. According to an uncorroborated passage in Herodotus, Deioces achieved power by acquiring a reputation for justice, and having achieved power, became a despot. He issued regulations "that no man should be admitted to the King's presence, but every one should consult him by means of messengers; and moreover, that it should be accounted indecency for any one

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\* Probably the modern Hamadan.

to laugh or spit before him. He established such ceremony about his person for this reason, . . . that he might appear to be of a different nature to them who did not see him."<sup>3</sup> Under his leadership the Medes, strengthened by their natural and frugal life, and hardened by custom and environment to the necessities of war, became a threat to the power of Assyria—which repeatedly invaded Media, thought it most instructively defeated, and found it in fact never tired of fighting for its liberty. The greatest of the Median kings, Cyaxares, settled the matter by destroying Nineveh. Inspired by this victory, his army swept through western Asia to the very gates of Sardis, only to be turned back by an eclipse of the sun. The opposing leaders, frightened by this apparent warning from the skies, signed a treaty of peace, and sealed it by drinking each other's blood.<sup>4</sup> In the next year Cyaxares died, having in the course of one reign expanded his kingdom from a subject province into an empire embracing Assyria, Media and Persia. Within a generation after his death this empire came to an end.

Its tenure was too brief to permit of any substantial contribution to civilization, except in so far as it prepared for the culture of Persia. To Persia the Medes gave their Aryan language, their alphabet of thirty-six characters, their replacement of clay with parchment and pen as writing materials,<sup>5</sup> their extensive use of the column in architecture, their moral code of conscientious husbandry in time of peace and limitless bravery in time of war, their Zoroastrian religion of Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman, their patriarchal family and polygamous marriage, and a body of law sufficiently like that of the later empire to be united with it in the famous phrase of Daniel about "the law of the Medes and the Persians, which altereth not."<sup>6</sup> Of their literature and their art not a stone or a letter remains.

Their degeneration was even more rapid than their rise. Astyages, who succeeded his father Cyaxares, proved again that monarchy is a gamble, in whose royal succession great wits and madness are near allied. He inherited the kingdom with equanimity, and settled down to enjoy it. Under his example the nation forgot its stern morals and stoic ways; wealth had come too suddenly to be wisely used. The upper classes became the slaves of fashion and luxury, the men wore embroidered trousers, the women covered themselves with cosmetics and jewelry, the very horses were often caparisoned in gold.<sup>7</sup> These once simple and pastoral people, who had been glad to be carried in rude wagons with



wheels cut roughly out of the trunks of trees," now rode in expensive chariots from feast to feast. The early kings had prided themselves on justice; but Astyages, being displeased with Harpagus, served up to him the dismembered and headless body of his own son, and forced him to eat of it.<sup>9</sup> Harpagus ate, saying that whatever a king did was agreeable to him; but he revenged himself by helping Cyrus to depose Astyages. When Cyrus, the brilliant young ruler of the Median dependency of Anshan, in Persia, rebelled against the effeminate despot of Ecbatana, the Medes themselves welcomed Cyrus' victory, and accepted him, almost without protest, as their king. By one engagement Media ceased to be the master of Persia, Persia became the master of Media, and prepared to become master of the whole Near Eastern world.

## II. THE GREAT KINGS

### *The romantic Cyrus—His enlightened policies—Cambyses—Darius the Great—The invasion of Greece*

Cyrus was one of those natural rulers at whose coronation, as Emerson said, all men rejoice. Royal in spirit and action, capable of wise administration as well as of dramatic conquest, generous to the defeated and loved by those who had been his enemies—no wonder the Greeks made him the subject of innumerable romances, and—to their minds—the greatest hero before Alexander. It is a disappointment to us that we cannot draw a reliable picture of him from either Herodotus or Xenophon. The former has mingled many fables with his history,<sup>10</sup> while the other has made the *Cyropædia* an essay on the military art, with incidental lectures on education and philosophy; at times Xenophon confuses Cyrus and Socrates. These delightful stories being put aside, the figure of Cyrus becomes merely an attractive ghost. We can only say that he was handsome—since the Persians made him their model of physical beauty to the end of their ancient art;<sup>11</sup> that he established the Achæmenid Dynasty of "Great Kings," which ruled Persia through the most famous period of its history; that he organized the soldiery of Media and Persia into an invincible army, captured Sardis and Babylon, ended for a thousand years the rule of the Semites in western Asia, and absorbed the former realms of Assyria, Babylonia, Lydia and Asia Minor into the Persian Empire, the largest political organization of pre-Roman antiquity, and one of the best-governed in history.

So far as we can visualize him through the haze of legend, he was the most amiable of conquerors, and founded his empire upon generosity. His enemies knew that he was lenient, and they did not fight him with that desperate courage which men show when their only choice is to kill or die. We have seen how, according to Herodotus, he rescued Crœsus from the funeral pyre at Sardis, and made him one of his most honored counselors; and we have seen how magnanimously he treated the Jews. The first principle of his policy was that the various peoples of his empire should be left free in their religious worship and beliefs, for he fully understood the first principle of statesmanship—that religion is stronger than the state. Instead of sacking cities and wrecking temples he showed a courteous respect for the deities of the conquered, and contributed to maintain their shrines; even the Babylonians, who had resisted him so long, warmed towards him when they found him preserving their sanctuaries and honoring their pantheon. Wherever he went in his unprecedented career he offered pious sacrifice to the local divinities. Like Napoleon he accepted indifferently all religions, and—with much better grace—humored all the gods.

Like Napoleon, too, he died of excessive ambition. Having won all the Near East, he began a series of campaigns aimed to free Media and Persia from the inroads of central Asia's nomadic barbarians. He seems to have carried these excursions as far as the Jaxartes on the north and India on the east. Suddenly, at the height of his curve, he was slain in battle with the Massagetæ, an obscure tribe that peopled the southern shores of the Caspian Sea. Like Alexander he conquered an empire, but did not live to organize it.

One great defect had sullied his character—occasional and incalculable cruelty. It was inherited, unmixed with Cyrus' generosity, by his half-mad son. Cambyzes began by putting to death his brother and rival, Smerdis; then, lured by the accumulated wealth of Egypt, he set forth to extend the Persian Empire to the Nile. He succeeded, but apparently at the cost of his sanity. Memphis was captured easily, but an army of fifty thousand Persians sent to annex the Oasis of Ammon perished in the desert, and an expedition to Carthage failed because the Phœnician crews of the Persian fleet refused to attack a Phœnician colony. Cambyzes lost his head, and abandoned the wise clemency and tolerance of his father. He publicly scoffed at the Egyptian religion, and plunged his dagger derisively into the bull revered by the Egyptians as the god Apis;

he exhumed mummies and pried into royal tombs regardless of ancient curses; he profaned the temples and ordered their idols to be burned. He thought in this way to cure the Egyptians of superstition; but when he was stricken with illness—apparently epileptic convulsions—the Egyptians were certain that their gods had punished him, and that their theology was now confirmed beyond dispute. As if again to illustrate the inconveniences of monarchy, Cambyzes, with a Napoleonic kick in the stomach, killed his sister and wife Roxana, slew his son Prexaspes with an arrow, buried twelve noble Persians alive, condemned Croesus to death, repented, rejoiced to learn that the sentence had not been carried out, and punished the officers who had delayed in executing it.<sup>11</sup> On his way back to Persia he learned that a usurper had seized the throne and was being supported by widespread revolution. From that moment he disappears from history; tradition has it that he killed himself.<sup>12</sup>

The usurper had pretended to be Smerdis, miraculously preserved from Cambyzes' fratricidal jealousy; in reality he was a religious fanatic, a devotee of the early Magian faith who was bent upon destroying Zoroastrianism, the official religion of the Persian state. Another revolution soon deposed him, and the seven aristocrats who had organized it raised one of their number, Darius, son of Hystaspes, to the throne. In this bloody way began the reign of Persia's greatest king.

Succession to the throne, in Oriental monarchies, was marked not only by palace revolutions in strife for the royal power, but by uprisings in subject colonies that grasped the chance of chaos, or an inexperienced ruler, to reclaim their liberty. The usurpation and assassination of "Smerdis" gave to Persia's vassals an excellent opportunity: the governors of Egypt and Lydia refused submission, and the provinces of Susiana, Babylonia, Media, Assyria, Armenia, Sacia and others rose in simultaneous revolt. Darius subdued them with a ruthless hand. Taking Babylon after a long siege, he crucified three thousand of its leading citizens as an inducement to obedience in the rest; and in a series of swift campaigns he "pacified" one after another of the rebellious states. Then, perceiving how easily the vast empire might in any crisis fall to pieces, he put off the armor of war, became one of the wisest administrators in history, and set himself to reestablish his realm in a way that became a model of imperial organization till the fall of Rome. His rule gave western Asia a generation of such order and prosperity as that quarrelsome region had never known before.

He had hoped to govern in peace, but it is the fatality of empire to breed repeated war. For the conquered must be periodically reconquered, and the conquerors must keep the arts and habits of camp and battle-field; and at any moment the kaleidoscope of change may throw up a new empire to challenge the old. In such a situation wars must be invented if they do not arise of their own accord; each generation must be inured to the rigors of campaigns, and taught by practice the sweet decorum of dying for one's country.

Perhaps it was in part for this reason that Darius led his armies into southern Russia, across the Bosphorus and the Danube to the Volga, to chastise the marauding Scythians; and again across Afghanistan and a hundred mountain ranges into the valley of the Indus, adding thereby extensive regions and millions of souls and rupees to his realm. More substantial reasons must be sought for his expedition into Greece. Herodotus would have us believe that Darius entered upon this historic *faux pas* because one of his wives, Atossa, teased him into it in bed;<sup>4</sup> but it is more dignified to believe that the King recognized in the Greek city-states and their colonies a potential empire, or an actual confederacy, dangerous to the Persian mastery of western Asia. When Ionia revolted and received aid from Sparta and Athens, Darius reconciled himself reluctantly to war. All the world knows the story of his passage across the Ægean, the defeat of his army at Marathon, and his gloomy return to Persia. There, amid far-flung preparations for another attempt upon Greece, he suddenly grew weak, and died.

### III. PERSIAN LIFE AND INDUSTRY

*The empire—The people—The language—The peasants—The imperial highways—Trade and finance*

At its greatest extent, under Darius, the Persian Empire included twenty provinces or "satrapies," embracing Egypt, Palestine, Syria, Phoenicia, Lydia, Phrygia, Ionia, Cappadocia, Cilicia, Armenia, Assyria, the Caucasus, Babylonia, Media, Persia, the modern Afghanistan and Baluchistan, India west of the Indus, Sogdiana, Bactria, and the regions of the Massagetæ and other central Asiatic tribes. Never before had history recorded so extensive an area brought under one government.

Persia itself, which was to rule these forty million souls for two hundred years, was not at that time the country now known to us as *Persia*,

and to its inhabitants as *Iran*; it was that smaller tract, immediately east of the Persian Gulf, known to the ancient Persians as *Pars*, and to the modern Persians as *Fars* or *Farsistan*.<sup>16</sup> Composed almost entirely of mountains and deserts, poor in rivers, subject to severe winters and hot, arid summers,\* it could support its two million inhabitants<sup>17</sup> only through such external contributions as trade or conquest might bring. Its race of hardy mountaineers came, like the Medes, of Indo-European stock perhaps from South Russia; and its language and early religion reveal its close kinship with those Aryans who crossed Afghanistan to become the ruling caste of northern India. Darius I, in an inscription at Naksh-i-Rustam, described himself as "a Persian, the son of a Persian, an Aryan of Aryan descent." The Zoroastrians spoke of their primitive land as *Airyana-vaejo*—"the Aryan home."<sup>†</sup> Strabo applied the name *Ariana* to what is now called by essentially the same word—*Iran*.<sup>18</sup>

The Persians were apparently the handsomest people of the ancient Near East. The monuments picture them as erect and vigorous, made hardy by their mountains and yet refined by their wealth, with a pleasing symmetry of features, an almost Greek straightness of nose, and a certain nobility of countenance and carriage. They adopted for the most part the Median dress, and later the Median ornaments. They considered it indecent to reveal more than the face; clothing covered them from turban, fillet or cap to sandals or leather shoes. Triple drawers, a white under-garment of linen, a double tunic, with sleeves hiding the hands, and a girdle at the waist, kept the population warm in winter and hot in summer. The king distinguished himself with embroidered trousers of a crimson hue, and saffron-buttoned shoes. The dress of the women differed from that of the men only in a slit at the breast. The men wore long beards and hung their hair in curls, or, later, covered it with wigs.<sup>19</sup> In the wealthier days of the empire men as well as women made much use of cosmetics; creams were employed to improve the complexion, and coloring matter was applied to the eyelids to increase the apparent size and brilliance of the eyes. A special class of "adorners," called *kosmetai* by the Greeks, arose as beauty experts to the aristocracy. The Persians were connoisseurs in scents, and were believed by the ancients to have invented cosmetic creams. The king never went to war without a case of costly unguents to ensure his fragrance in victory or defeat.<sup>20</sup>

Many languages have been used in the long history of Persia. The speech of the court and the nobility in the days of Darius I was Old Persian—so

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\* At Susa, says Strabo, the summer heat was so intense that snakes and lizards could not cross the streets quickly enough to escape being burned to death by the sun.<sup>21</sup>

† Generally identified with the district of Arran on the river Araxes.

closely related to Sanskrit that evidently both were once dialects of an older tongue, and were cousins to our own.\* Old Persian developed on the one hand into Zend—the language of the *Zend-Avesta*—and on the other hand into Pahlavi, a Hindu tongue from which has come the Persian language of to-day.<sup>22</sup> When the Persians took to writing they adopted the Babylonian cuneiform for their inscriptions, and the Aramaic alphabetic script for their documents.<sup>23</sup> They simplified the unwieldy syllabary of the Babylonians from three hundred characters to thirty-six signs which gradually became letters instead of syllables, and constituted a cuneiform alphabet.<sup>24</sup> Writing, however, seemed to the Persians an effeminate amusement, for which they could spare little time from love, war and the chase. They did not condescend to produce literature.

The common man was contentedly illiterate, and gave himself completely to the culture of the soil. The *Zend-Avesta* exalted agriculture as the basic and noblest occupation of mankind, pleasing above all other labors to Ahura-Mazda, the supreme god. Some of the land was tilled by peasant proprietors, who occasionally joined several families in agricultural coöperatives to work extensive areas together.<sup>25</sup> Part of the land was owned by feudal barons, and cultivated by tenants in return for a share of the crop; part of it was tilled by foreign (never Persian) slaves. Oxen pulled a plough of wood armed with a metal point. Artificial irrigation drew water from the mountains to the fields. Barley and wheat were the staple crops and foods, but much meat was eaten and much wine drunk. Cyrus served wine to his army,<sup>26</sup> and Persian councils never undertook serious discussions of policy when sober†—though they took care to revise their decisions the next morning. One intoxicating drink, the *haoma*, was offered as a pleasant sacrifice to the gods, and was believed to engender in its addicts not excitement and anger, but righteousness and piety.<sup>27</sup>

Industry was poorly developed in Persia; she was content to let the nations of the Near East practice the handicrafts while she bought their

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\* Some examples of the correlation:

<i>Old Persian</i>	<i>Sanskrit</i>	<i>Greek</i>	<i>Latin</i>	<i>German</i>	<i>English</i>
pitar	pitar	pater	pater	Vater	father
nama	nama	onoma	nomen	Nahme	name
napat (grandson)	napat	anepsios	nepos	Neffe	nephew
bar	bhri	ferein	ferre	föhren	bear
matar	matar	meter	mater	Mutter	mother
bratar	bhratar	phrater	frater	Bruder	brother
sta	stha	istemi	sto	stehen	stand <sup>28</sup>

† "They carry on their most important deliberations." Strabo reports, "when drinking wine; and they regard decisions then made as more lasting than those made when they are sober."<sup>29</sup>

products with their imperial tribute. She showed more originality in the improvement of communications and transport. Engineers under the instructions of Darius I built great roads uniting the various capitals; one of these highways, from Susa to Sardis, was fifteen hundred miles long. The roads were accurately measured by parasangs (3.4 miles); and at every fourth parasang, says Herodotus, "there are royal stations and excellent inns, and the whole road is through an inhabited and safe country."<sup>80</sup> At each station a fresh relay of horses stood ready to carry on the mail, so that, though the ordinary traveler required ninety days to go from Susa to Sardis, the royal mail moved over the distance as quickly as an automobile party does now—that is, in a little less than a week. The larger rivers were crossed by ferries, but the engineers could, when they wished, throw across the Euphrates, even across the Hellespont, substantial bridges over which hundreds of sceptical elephants could pass in safety. Other roads led through the Afghanistan passes to India, and made Susa a half-way house to the already fabulous riches of the East. These roads were built primarily for military and governmental purposes, to facilitate central control and administration; but they served also to stimulate commerce and the exchange of customs, ideas, and the indispensable superstitions of mankind. Along these roads, for example, angels and the Devil passed from Persian into Jewish and Christian mythology.

Navigation was not so vigorously advanced as land transportation; the Persians had no fleet of their own, but merely engaged or conscripted the vessels of the Phœnicians and the Greeks. Darius built a great canal uniting Persia with the Mediterranean through the Red Sea and the Nile, but the carelessness of his successors soon surrendered this achievement to the shifting sands. When Xerxes royally commanded part of his naval forces to circumnavigate Africa, it turned back in disgrace shortly after passing through the Pillars of Hercules.<sup>81</sup> Commerce was for the most part abandoned to foreigners—Babylonians, Phœnicians and Jews; the Persians despised trade, and looked upon a market place as a breeding-ground of lies. The wealthy classes took pride in supplying most of their wants directly from their own fields and shops, not contaminating their fingers with either buying or selling.<sup>82</sup> Payments, loans and interest were at first in the form of goods, especially cattle and grain; coinage came later from Lydia. Darius issued gold and silver "darics" stamped with his features,\* and valued at a gold-to-silver ratio of 13.5 to 1. This was the origin of the bimetallic ratio in modern currencies.<sup>83</sup>

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\* But having no relation with his name; *daric* was from the Persian *zariq*—"a piece of gold." The gold daric had a face value of \$5.00. Three thousand gold darics made one Persian talent.<sup>84</sup>

## IV. AN EXPERIMENT IN GOVERNMENT

*The king—The nobles—The army—Law—A savage punishment—  
The capitals—The satrapies—An achievement in administration*

The life of Persia was political and military rather than economic; its wealth was based not on industry but on power; it existed precariously as a little governing isle in an immense and unnaturally subject sea. The imperial organization that maintained this artefact was one of the most unique and competent in history. At its head was the king, or *Khshathra*—i.e., warrior;\* the title indicates the military origin and character of the Persian monarchy. Since lesser kings were vassal to him, the Persian ruler entitled himself "King of Kings," and the ancient world made no protest against his claim; the Greeks called him simply *Basileus*—The King.<sup>86</sup> His power was theoretically absolute; he could kill with a word, without trial or reason given, after the manner of some very modern dictator; and occasionally he delegated to his mother or his chief wife this privilege of capricious slaughter.<sup>87</sup> Few even of the greatest nobles dared offer any criticism or rebuke, and public opinion was cautiously impotent. The father whose innocent son had been shot before his eyes by the king merely complimented the monarch on his excellent archery; offenders bastinadoed by the royal order thanked His Majesty for keeping them in mind.<sup>88</sup> The king might rule as well as reign, if, like Cyrus and the first Darius, he cared to bestir himself; but the later monarchs delegated most of the cares of government to noble subordinates or imperial eunuchs, and spent their time at love, dice or the chase.<sup>89</sup> The court was overrun with eunuchs who, from their coigns of vantage as guards of the harem and pedagogues to the princes, stewed a poisonous brew of intrigue in every reign.<sup>†</sup> The king had the right to choose his successor from among his sons, but ordinarily the succession was determined by assassination and revolution.

The royal power was limited in practice by the strength of the aristocracy that mediated between the people and the throne. It was a matter of custom that the six families of the men who had shared with Darius I

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\* The word survives in the present title of the Persian king—*Shah*. Its stem appears also in the *Satrap*s or provincial officials of Persia, and in the *Kshatriya* or warrior caste of India.

† Five hundred castrated boys came annually from Babylonia to act as "keepers of the women" in the harems of Persia.<sup>90</sup>



the dangers of the revolt against false Smerdis, should have exceptional privileges and be consulted in all matters of vital interest. Many of the nobles attended court, and served as a council for whose advice the monarch usually showed the highest regard. Most members of the aristocracy were attached to the throne by receiving their estates from the king; in return they provided him with men and materials when he took the field. Within their fiefs they had almost complete authority—levying taxes, enacting laws, executing judgment, and maintaining their own armed forces.<sup>10</sup>

The real basis of the royal power and imperial government was the army; an empire exists only so long as it retains its superior capacity to kill. The obligation to enlist on any declaration of war fell upon every able-bodied male from fifteen to fifty years of age.<sup>11</sup> When the father of three sons petitioned Darius to exempt one of them from service, all three were put to death; and when another father, having sent four sons to the battlefield, begged Xerxes to permit the fifth son to stay behind and manage the family estate, the body of this fifth son was cut in two by royal order and placed on both sides of the road by which the army was to pass.<sup>12</sup> The troops marched off to war amid the blare of martial music and the plaudits of citizens above the military age.

The spearhead of the army was the Royal Guard—two thousand horsemen and two thousand infantry, all nobles—whose function it was to guard the king. The standing army consisted exclusively of Persians and Medes, and from this permanent force came most of the garrisons stationed as centers of persuasion at strategic points in the empire. The complete force consisted of levies from every subject nation, each group with its own distinct language, weapons and habits of war. Its equipment and retinue was as varied as its origin: bows and arrows, scimitars, javelins, daggers, pikes, slings, knives, shields, helmets, leather cuirasses, coats of mail, horses, elephants, heralds, scribes, eunuchs, prostitutes, concubines, and chariots armed on each hub with great steel scythes. The whole mass, though vast in number, and amounting in the expedition of Xerxes to 1,800,000 men, never achieved unity, and at the first sign of a reverse it became a disorderly mob. It conquered by mere force of numbers, by an elastic capacity for absorbing casualties; it was destined to be overthrown as soon as it should encounter a well-organized army speaking one speech and accepting one discipline. This was the secret of Marathon and Plataea.

In such a state the only law was the will of the king and the power of the army; no rights were sacred against these, and no precedents could

avail except an earlier decree of the king. For it was a proud boast of Persia that its laws never changed, and that a royal promise or decree was irrevocable. In his edicts and judgments the king was supposed to be inspired by the god Ahura-Mazda himself; therefore the law of the realm was the Divine Will, and any infraction of it was an offense against the deity. The king was the supreme court, but it was his custom to delegate this function to some learned elder in his retinue. Below him was a High Court of Justice with seven members, and below this were local courts scattered through the realm. The priests formulated the law, and for a long time acted as judges; in later days laymen, even laywomen, sat in judgment. Bail was accepted in all but the most important cases, and a regular procedure of trial was followed. The court occasionally decreed rewards as well as punishments, and in considering a crime weighed against it the good record and services of the accused. The law's delays were mitigated by fixing a time-limit for each case, and by proposing to all disputants an arbitrator of their own choice who might bring them to a peaceable settlement. As the law gathered precedents and complexity a class of men arose called "speakers of the law," who offered to explain it to litigants and help them conduct their cases.<sup>43</sup> Oaths were taken, and use was occasionally made of the ordeal.<sup>44</sup> Bribery was discouraged by making the tender or acceptance of it a capital offense. Cambyses improved the integrity of the courts by causing an unjust judge to be flayed alive, and using his skin to upholster the judicial bench—to which he then appointed the dead judge's son.<sup>45</sup>

Minor punishments took the form of flogging—from five to two hundred blows with a horsewhip; the poisoning of a shepherd dog received two hundred strokes, manslaughter ninety.<sup>46</sup> The administration of the law was partly financed by commuting stripes into fines, at the rate of six rupees to a stripe.<sup>47</sup> More serious crimes were punished with branding, maiming, mutilation, blinding, imprisonment or death. The letter of the law forbade any one, even the king, to sentence a man to death for a simple crime; but it could be decreed for treason, rape, sodomy, murder, "self-pollution," burning or burying the dead, intrusion upon the king's privacy, approaching one of his concubines, accidentally sitting upon his throne, or for any displeasure to the ruling house.<sup>48</sup> Death was procured in such cases by poisoning, impaling, crucifixion, hanging (usually with the head down), stoning, burying the body up to the head, crushing the head between huge stones, smothering the victim in hot ashes, or by

the incredibly cruel rite called "the boats."\* Some of these barbarous punishments were bequeathed to the invading Turks of a later age, and passed down into the heritage of mankind."

With these laws and this army the king sought to govern his twenty satrapies from his many capitals—originally Pasargadæ, occasionally Persepolis, in summer Ecbatana, usually Susa; here, in the ancient capital of Elam, the history of the ancient Near East came full circle, binding the beginning and the end. Susa had the advantage of inaccessibility, and the disadvantages of distance; Alexander had to come two thousand miles to take it, but it had to send its troops fifteen hundred miles to suppress revolts in Lydia or Egypt. Ultimately the great roads merely paved the way for the physical conquest of western Asia by Greece and Rome, and the theological conquest of Greece and Rome by western Asia.

The empire was divided into provinces or satrapies for convenience of administration and taxation. Each province was governed in the name of the King of Kings, sometimes by a vassal prince, ordinarily by a "satrap" (ruler) royally appointed for as long a time as he could retain favor at the court. To keep the satraps in hand Darius sent to each province a general to control its armed forces independently of the governor; and to make matters trebly sure he appointed in each province a secretary, independent of both satrap and general, to report their behavior to the king. As a further precaution an intelligence service known as "The King's Eyes and Ears" might appear at any moment to examine the affairs, records and finances of the province. Sometimes the satrap was

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\* Because the soldier Mithridates, in his cups, blurted out the fact that it was he, and not the king, who should have received credit for slaying Cyrus the Younger at the battle of Cunaxa, Artaxerxes II, says Plutarch, "decreed that Mithridates should be put to death in boats; which execution is after the following manner: Taking two boats framed exactly to fit and answer each other, they lay down in one of them the malefactor that suffers, upon his back; then, covering it with the other, and so setting them together that the head, hands and feet of him are left outside, and the rest of his body lies shut up within, they offer him food, and if he refuse to eat it, they force him to do it by pricking his eyes; then, after he has eaten, they drench him with a mixture of milk and honey, pouring it not only into his mouth but all over his face. They then keep his face continually turned toward the sun; and it becomes completely covered up and hidden by the multitude of flies that settle upon it. And as within the boats he does what those that eat and drink must do, creeping things and vermin spring out of the corruption of the excrement, and these entering into the bowels of him, his body is consumed. When the man is manifestly dead, the uppermost boat being taken off, they find his flesh devoured, and swarms of such noisome creatures preying upon and, as it were, growing to his inwards. In this way Mithridates, after suffering for seventeen days, at last expired."

deposed without trial, sometimes he was quietly poisoned by his servants at the order of the king. Underneath the satrap and the secretary was a horde of clerks who carried on so much of the government as had no direct need of force; this body of clerks carried over from one administration to another, even from reign to reign. The king dies, but the bureaucracy is immortal.

The salaries of these provincial officials were paid not by the king but by the people whom they ruled. The remuneration was ample enough to provide the satraps with palaces, harems, and extensive hunting parks to which the Persians gave the historic name of *paradise*. In addition, each satrapy was required to send the king, annually, a fixed amount of money and goods by way of taxation. India sent 4680 talents, Assyria and Babylonia 1000, Egypt 700, the four satrapies of Asia Minor 1760, etc., making a total of some 14,560 talents—variously estimated as equivalent to from \$160,000,000 to \$218,000,000 a year. Furthermore, each province was expected to contribute to the king's needs in goods and supplies: Egypt had to furnish corn annually for 120,000 men; the Medes provided 100,000 sheep, the Armenians 30,000 foals, the Babylonians five hundred young eunuchs. Other sources of wealth swelled the central revenue to such a point that when Alexander captured the Persian capitals after one hundred and fifty years of Persian extravagance, after a hundred expensive revolts and wars, and after Darius III had carried off 8000 talents with him in his flight, he found 180,000 talents left in the royal treasuries—some \$2,700,000,000.<sup>24</sup>

Despite these high charges for its services, the Persian Empire was the most successful experiment in imperial government that the Mediterranean world would know before the coming of Rome—which was destined to inherit much of the earlier empire's political structure and administrative forms. The cruelty and dissipation of the later monarchs, the occasional barbarism of the laws, and the heavy burdens of taxation were balanced, as human governments go, by such order and peace as made the provinces rich despite these levies, and by such liberty as only the most enlightened empires have accorded to subject states. Each region retained its own language, laws, customs, morals, religion and coinage, and sometimes its native dynasty of kings. Many of the tributary nations, like Babylonia, Phoenicia and Palestine, were well satisfied with the situation, and suspected that their own generals and tax-gatherers would have plucked them even more ferociously. Under Darius I the

Persian Empire was an achievement in political organization; only Trajan, Hadrian and the Antonines would equal it.

## V. ZARATHUSTRA

*The coming of the Prophet—Persian religion before Zarathustra—  
The Bible of Persia—Ahura-Mazda—The good and the evil  
spirits—Their struggle for the possession of the world*

Persian legend tells how, many hundreds of years before the birth of Christ, a great prophet appeared in *Airyana-vaejo*, the ancient "home of the Aryans." His people called him Zarathustra; but the Greeks, who could never bear the orthography of the "barbarians" patiently, called him Zoroastres. His conception was divine: his guardian angel entered into an *haoma* plant, and passed with its juice into the body of a priest as the latter offered divine sacrifice; at the same time a ray of heaven's glory entered the bosom of a maid of noble lineage. The priest espoused the maid, the imprisoned angel mingled with the imprisoned ray, and Zarathustra began to be.<sup>m</sup> He laughed aloud on the very day of his birth, and the evil spirits that gather around every life fled from him in tumult and terror.<sup>n</sup> Out of his great love for wisdom and righteousness he withdrew from the society of men, and chose to live in a mountain wilderness on cheese and the fruits of the soil. The Devil tempted him, but to no avail. His breast was pierced with a sword, and his entrails were filled with molten lead; he did not complain, but clung to his faith in Ahura-Mazda—the Lord of Light—as supreme god. Ahura-Mazda appeared to him and gave into his hands the *Avesta*, or Book of Knowledge and Wisdom, and bade him preach it to mankind. For a long time all the world ridiculed and persecuted him; but at last a high prince of Iran—Vishtaspa or Hystaspes—heard him gladly, and promised to spread the new faith among his people. Thus was the Zoroastrian religion born. Zarathustra himself lived to a very old age, was consumed in a flash of lightning, and ascended into heaven.<sup>n</sup>

We cannot tell how much of his story is true; perhaps some Josiah discovered him. The Greeks accepted him as historical, and honored him with an antiquity of 5500 years before their time;<sup>m</sup> Berosus the Babylonian brought him down to 2000 B.C.;<sup>n</sup> modern historians, when they believe in his existence, assign him to any century between the tenth

and the sixth before Christ.<sup>100</sup> When he appeared, among the ancestors of the Medes and the Persians, he found his people worshiping animals,<sup>101</sup> ancestors,<sup>102</sup> the earth and the sun, in a religion having many elements and deities in common with the Hindus of the Vedic age. The chief divinities of this pre-Zoroastrian faith were Mithra, god of the sun, Anaita, goddess of fertility and the earth, and Haoma the bull-god who, dying, rose again, and gave mankind his blood as a drink that would confer immortality; him the early Iranians worshiped by drinking the intoxicating juice of the *haoma* herb found on their mountain slopes.<sup>103</sup> Zarathustra was shocked at these primitive deities and this Dionysian ritual; he rebelled against the "Magi" or priests who prayed and sacrificed to them; and with all the bravery of his contemporaries Amos and Isaiah he announced to the world one God—here Ahura-Mazda, the Lord of Light and Heaven, of whom all other gods were but manifestations and qualities. Perhaps Darius I, who accepted the new doctrine, saw in it a faith that would both inspire his people and strengthen his government. From the moment of his accession he declared war upon the old cults and the Magian priesthood, and made Zoroastrianism the religion of the state.

The Bible of the new faith was the collection of books in which the disciples of the Master had gathered his sayings and his prayers. Later followers called these books *Avesta*; by the error of a modern scholar they are known to the Occidental world as the *Zend-Avesta*.† The contemporary non-Persian reader is terrified to find that the substantial volumes that survive, though much shorter than our Bible, are but a small fraction of the revelation vouchsafed to Zarathustra by his god.‡ What remains is, to the

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\* If the Vishtaspa who promulgated him was the father of Darius I, the last of these dates seems the most probable.

† Anquetil-Duperron (ca. 1771 A.D.) introduced the prefix *Zend*, which the Persians had used to denote merely a translation and interpretation of the *Avesta*. The last is a word of uncertain origin, probably derived, like *Veda*, from the Aryan root *vid*, to know.<sup>104</sup>

‡ Native tradition tells of a larger *Avesta* in twenty-one books called *Nasks*; these in turn, we are told, were but part of the original Scriptures. One of the *Nasks* remains intact—the *Vendidad*; the rest survive only in scattered fragments in such later compositions as the *Dimkard* and the *Bundahish*. Arab historians speak of the complete text as having covered 12,000 cowhides. According to a sacred tradition, two copies of this were made by Prince Vishtaspa; one of them was destroyed when Alexander burned the royal palace at Persepolis; the other was taken by the victorious Greeks to their own country, and being translated, provided the Greeks (according to the Persian authorities) with all their scientific knowledge. During the third century of the Christian Era Vologesus V, a Parthian king of the Arsacid Dynasty, ordered the collection of all

foreign and provincial observer, a confused mass of prayers, songs, legends, prescriptions, ritual and morals, brightened now and then by noble language, fervent devotion, ethical elevation, or lyric piety. Like our Old Testament it is a highly eclectic composition. The student discovers here and there the gods, the ideas, sometimes the very words and phrases of the *Rig-veda*—to such an extent that some Indian scholars consider the *Avesta* to have been inspired not by Ahura-Mazda but by the *Vedas*;<sup>66</sup> at other times one comes upon passages of ancient Babylonian provenance, such as the creation of the world in six periods (the heavens, the waters, the earth, plants, animals, man,) the descent of all men from two first parents, the establishment of an earthly paradise,<sup>67</sup> the discontent of the Creator with his creation, and his resolve to destroy all but a remnant of it by a flood.<sup>68</sup> But the specifically Iranian elements suffice abundantly to characterize the whole: the world is conceived in dualistic terms as the stage of a conflict, lasting twelve thousand years, between the god Ahura-Mazda and the devil Ahriman; purity and honesty are the greatest of the virtues, and will lead to everlasting life; the dead must not be buried or burned, as by the obscene Greeks or Hindus, but must be thrown to the dogs or to birds of prey.<sup>69</sup>

The god of Zarathustra was first of all "the whole circle of the heavens" themselves. Ahura-Mazda "clothes himself with the solid vault of the firmament as his raiment; . . . his body is the light and the sovereign glory; the sun and the moon are his eyes." In later days, when the religion passed from prophets to politicians, the great deity was pictured as a gigantic king of imposing majesty. As creator and ruler of the world he was assisted by a legion of lesser divinities, originally pictured as forms and powers of nature—fire and water, sun and moon, wind and

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fragments surviving either in writing or in the memory of the faithful; this collection was fixed in its present form as the Zoroastrian canon in the fourth century, and became the official religion of the Persian state. The compilation so formed suffered further ravages during the Moslem conquest of Persia in the seventh century.<sup>70</sup>

The extant fragments may be divided into five parts:

- (1) The *Yasna*—forty-five chapters of the liturgy recited by the Zoroastrian priests, and twenty-seven chapters (chs. 28-54) called *Gathas*, containing, apparently in metric form, the discourses and revelations of the Prophet;
- (2) The *Vispered*—twenty-four additional chapters of liturgy;
- (3) The *Vendidad*—twenty-two chapters or *fargards* expounding the theology and moral legislation of the Zoroastrians, and now forming the priestly code of the Parsees;
- (4) The *Yashts*, i.e., songs of praise—twenty-one psalms to angels, interspersed with legendary history and a prophecy of the end of the world; and
- (5) The *Khordak Avesta* or Small *Avesta*—prayers for various occasions of life.<sup>71</sup>

rain; but it was the achievement of Zarathustra that he conceived his god as supreme over all things, in terms as noble as the Book of Job:

This I ask thee, tell me truly, O Ahura-Mazda: Who determined the paths of suns and stars—who is it by whom the moon waxes and wanes? . . . Who, from below, sustained the earth and the firmament from falling—who sustained the waters and plants—who yoked swiftness with the winds and the clouds—who, Ahura-Mazda, called forth the Good Mind?<sup>90</sup>

This "Good Mind" meant not any human mind, but a divine wisdom, almost a *Logos*,\* used by Ahura-Mazda as an intermediate agency of creation. Zarathustra had interpreted Ahura-Mazda as having seven aspects or qualities: Light, Good Mind, Right, Dominion, Piety, Well-being, and Immortality. His followers, habituated to polytheism, interpreted these attributes as persons (called by them *amesha spenta*, or immortal holy ones) who, under the leadership of Ahura-Mazda, created and managed the world; in this way the majestic monotheism of the founder became—as in the case of Christianity—the polytheism of the people. In addition to these holy spirits were the guardian angels, of which Persian theology supplied one for every man, woman and child. But just as these angels and the immortal holy ones helped men to virtue, so, according to the pious Persian (influenced, presumably, by Babylonian demonology), seven *dævas*, or evil spirits, hovered in the air, always tempting men to crime and sin, and forever engaged in a war upon Ahura-Mazda and every form of righteousness. The leader of these devils was Angro-Mainyus or Ahriman, Prince of Darkness and ruler of the nether world, prototype of that busy Satan whom the Jews appear to have adopted from Persia and bequeathed to Christianity. It was Ahriman, for example, who had created serpents, vermin, locusts, ants, winter, darkness, crime, sin, sodomy, menstruation, and the other plagues of life; and it was these inventions of the Devil that had ruined the Paradise in which Ahura-Mazda had placed the first progenitors of the human race.<sup>91</sup> Zarathustra seems to have regarded these evil spirits as spurious deities, popular and superstitious incarnations of the abstract forces that resist the progress of man. His followers, however, found it easier to think of them as living

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\* Darmesteter believes the "Good Mind" to be a semi-Gnostic adaptation of Philo's *logos theios*, or Divine Word, and therefore dates the *Yasna* about the first century B.C.<sup>90</sup>



beings, and personified them in such abundance that in after times the devils of Persian theology were numbered in millions.<sup>73</sup>

As this system of belief came from Zarathustra it bordered upon monotheism. Even with the intrusion of Ahriman and the evil spirits it remained as monotheistic as Christianity was to be with its Satan, its devils and its angels; indeed, one hears, in early Christian theology, as many echoes of Persian dualism as of Hebrew Puritanism or Greek philosophy. The Zoroastrian conception of God might have satisfied as particular a spirit as Matthew Arnold: Ahura-Mazda was the sum-total of all those forces in the world that make for righteousness; and morality lay in coöperation with those forces. Furthermore there was in this dualism a certain justice to the contradictoriness and perversity of things, which monotheism never provided; and though the Zoroastrian theologians, after the manner of Hindu mystics and Scholastic philosophers, sometimes argued that evil was unreal,<sup>74</sup> they offered, in effect, a theology well adapted to dramatize for the average mind the moral issues of life. The last act of the play, they promised, would be—for the just man—a happy ending: after four epochs of three thousand years each, in which Ahura-Mazda and Ahriman would alternately predominate, the forces of evil would be finally destroyed; right would triumph everywhere, and evil would forever cease to be. Then all good men would join Ahura-Mazda in Paradise, and the wicked would fall into a gulf of outer darkness, where they would feed on poison eternally.<sup>75</sup>

#### VI. ZOROASTRIAN ETHICS

*Man as a battlefield—The Undying Fire—Hell, Purgatory and Paradise—The cult of Mithra—The Magi—The Parsees*

By picturing the world as the scene of a struggle between good and evil, the Zoroastrians established in the popular imagination a powerful supernatural stimulus and sanction for morals. The soul of man, like the universe, was represented as a battleground of beneficent and maleficent spirits; every man was a warrior, whether he liked it or not, in the army of either the Lord or the Devil; every act or omission advanced the cause of Ahura-Mazda or of Ahriman. It was an ethic even more admirable than the theology—if men must have supernatural supports for their morality; it gave to the common life a dignity and significance grander than any that could come to it from a world-view that looked upon man (in medie-

val phrase) as a helpless worm or (in modern terms) as a mechanical automaton. Human beings were not, to Zarathustra's thinking, mere pawns in this cosmic war; they had free will, since Ahura-Mazda wished them to be personalities in their own right; they might freely choose whether they would follow the Light or the Lie. For Ahriman was the Living Lie, and every liar was his servant.

Out of this general conception emerged a detailed but simple code of morals, centered about the Golden Rule. "That nature alone is good which shall not do unto another whatever is not good unto its own self."<sup>76</sup> Man's duty, says the *Avesta*, is three-fold: "To make him who is an enemy a friend; to make him who is wicked righteous; and to make him who is ignorant learned."<sup>77</sup> The greatest virtue is piety; second only to that is honor and honesty in action and speech. Interest was not to be charged to Persians, but loans were to be looked upon as almost sacred.<sup>78</sup> The worst sin of all (in the *Avestan* as in the Mosaic code) is unbelief. We may judge from the severe punishments with which it was honored that scepticism existed among the Persians; death was to be visited upon the apostate without delay.<sup>79</sup> The generosity and kindness enjoined by the Master did not apply, in practice, to infidels—i.e., foreigners; these were inferior species of men, whom Ahura-Mazda had deluded into loving their own countries only in order that they should not invade Persia. The Persians, says Herodotus, "esteem themselves to be far the most excellent of men in every respect"; they believe that other nations approach to excellence according to their geographical proximity to Persia, "but that they are the worst who live farthest from them."<sup>80</sup> The words have a contemporary ring, and a universal application.

Piety being the greatest virtue, the first duty of life was the worship of God with purification, sacrifice and prayer. Zoroastrian Persia tolerated neither temples nor idols; altars were erected on hill-tops, in palaces, or in the center of the city, and fires were kindled upon them in honor of Ahura-Mazda or some lesser divinity. Fire itself was worshiped as a god, Atar, the very son of the Lord of Light. Every family centered round the hearth; to keep the home fire burning, never to let it be extinguished, was part of the ritual of faith. And the Undying Fire of the skies, the Sun, was adored as the highest and most characteristic embodiment of

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<sup>76</sup> But *Yasna* xlvī, 6 reads: "Wicked is he who is good to the wicked." Inspired works are seldom consistent.

Ahura-Mazda or Mithra, quite as Ikhnaton had worshiped it in Egypt. "The morning Sun," said the Scriptures, "must be revered till mid-day, and that of mid-day must be revered till the afternoon, and that of the afternoon must be revered till evening. . . . While men reverence not the Sun, the good works which they do that day are not their own."<sup>80</sup> To the sun, to fire, to Ahura-Mazda, sacrifice was offered of flowers, bread, fruit, perfumes, oxen, sheep, camels, horses, asses and stags; anciently, as elsewhere, human victims had been offered too.<sup>81</sup> The gods received only the odor; the edible portions were kept for the priests and the worshipers, for as the Magi explained, the gods required only the soul of the victim.<sup>82</sup> Though the Master abominated it, and there is no mention of it in the *Avesta*, the old Aryan offering of the intoxicating *haoma* juice to the gods continued far into Zoroastrian days; the priest drank part of the sacred fluid, and divided the remainder among the faithful in holy communion.<sup>83</sup> When people were too poor to offer such tasty sacrifices they made up for it by adulatory prayer. Ahura-Mazda, like Yahveh, liked to sip his praise, and made for the pious an imposing list of his accomplishments, which became a favorite Persian litany.<sup>84</sup>

Given a life of piety and truth, the Persian might face death unafraid: this, after all, is one of the secret purposes of religion. Astivihad, the god of death, finds every one, no matter where; he is the confident seeker

from whom not one of mortal men can escape. Not those who go down deep, like Afrasyab the Turk, who made himself an iron palace under the earth, a thousand times the height of a man, with a hundred columns; in that palace he made the stars, the moon and the sun go round, making the light of day; in that palace he did everything at his pleasure, and he lived the happiest life: with all his strength and witchcraft he could not escape from Astivihad. . . . Nor he who dug this wide, round earth, with extremities that lie afar, like Dahak, who went from the east to the west searching for immortality and did not find it: with all his strength and power he could not escape from Astivihad. . . . To every one comes the unseen, deceiving Astivihad, who accepts neither compliments nor bribes, who is no respecter of persons, and ruthlessly makes men perish.<sup>85</sup>

And yet—for it is in the nature of religion to threaten and terrify as well as to console—the Persian could not look upon death unafraid unless

he had been a faithful warrior in Ahura-Mazda's cause. Beyond that most awful of all mysteries lay a hell and a purgatory as well as a paradise. All dead souls would have to pass over a Sifting Bridge: the good soul would come, on the other side, to the "Abode of Song," where it would be welcomed by a "young maiden radiant and strong, with well-developed bust," and would live in happiness with Ahura-Mazda to the end of time; but the wicked soul, failing to get across, would fall into as deep a level of hell as was adjusted to its degree of wickedness.<sup>86</sup> This hell was no mere Hades to which, as in earlier religions, all the dead descended, whether good or bad; it was an abyss of darkness and terror in which condemned souls suffered torments to the end of the world.<sup>87</sup> If a man's virtues outweighed his sins he would endure the cleansing of a temporary punishment; if he had sinned much but had done good works, he would suffer for only twelve thousand years, and then would rise into heaven.<sup>88</sup> Already, the good Zoroastrians tell us, the divine consummation of history approaches: the birth of Zarathustra began the last world-epoch of three thousand years; after three prophets of his seed have, at intervals, carried his doctrine throughout the world, the Last Judgment will be pronounced, the Kingdom of Ahura-Mazda will come, and Ahriman and all the forces of evil will be utterly destroyed. Then all good souls will begin life anew in a world without evil, darkness or pain.<sup>89</sup> "The dead shall rise, life shall return to the bodies, and they shall breathe again; . . . the whole physical world shall become free from old age and death, from corruption and decay, forever and ever."<sup>90</sup>

Here again, as in the Egyptian *Book of the Dead*, we hear the threat of that awful Last Judgment which seems to have passed from Persian to Jewish eschatology in the days of the Persian ascendancy in Palestine. It was an admirable formula for frightening children into obeying their parents; and since one function of religion is to ease the difficult and necessary task of disciplining the young by the old, we must grant to the Zoroastrian priests a fine professional skill in the brewing of theology. All in all it was a splendid religion, less warlike and bloody, less idolatrous and superstitious, than the other religions of its time; and it did not deserve to die so soon.

For a while, under Darius I, it became the spiritual expression of a nation at its height. But humanity loves poetry more than logic, and without a myth the people perish. Underneath the official worship of Ahura-Mazda the cult of Mithra and Anaita—god of the sun and goddess of

vegetation and fertility, generation and sex—continued to find devotees; and in the days of Artaxerxes II their names began to appear again in the royal inscriptions. Thereafter Mithra grew powerfully in favor and Ahura-Mazda faded away until, in the first centuries of our era, the cult of Mithra as a divine youth of beautiful countenance—with a radiant halo over his head as a symbol of his ancient identity with the sun—spread throughout the Roman Empire, and shared in giving Christmas to Christianity.\* Zarathustra, had he been immortal, would have been scandalized to find statues of Anaita, the Persian Aphrodite, set up in many cities of the empire within a few centuries after his death.<sup>11</sup> And surely it would not have pleased him to find so many pages of his revelation devoted to magic formulas for healing, divination and sorcery.<sup>12</sup> After his death the old priesthood of "Wise Men" or Magi conquered him as priesthoods conquer in the end every vigorous rebel or heretic—by adopting and absorbing him into their theology; they numbered him among the Magi and forgot him.<sup>13</sup> By an austere and monogamous life, by a thousand precise observances of sacred ritual and ceremonial cleanliness, by abstention from flesh food, and by a simple and unpretentious dress, the Magi acquired, even among the Greeks, a high reputation for wisdom, and among their own people an almost boundless influence. The Persian kings themselves became their pupils, and took no step of consequence without consulting them. The higher ranks among them were sages, the lower were diviners and sorcerers, readers of stars and interpreters of dreams;<sup>14</sup> the very word *magic* is taken from their name. Year by year the Zoroastrian elements in Persian religion faded away; they were revived for a time under the Sassanid Dynasty (226-651 A.D.), but were finally eliminated by the Moslem and Tatar invasions of Persia. Zoroastrianism survives today only among small communities in the province of Fars, and among the ninety thousand Parsees of India. These devotedly preserve and study the ancient scriptures, worship fire, earth, water and air as sacred, and expose their dead in "Towers of Silence" to birds of prey lest burning or burial should defile the holy elements. They are a people of excellent morals and character, a living tribute to the civilizing effect of Zarathustra's doctrine upon mankind.

\* Christmas was originally a solar festival, celebrating, at the winter solstice (about December 22nd), the lengthening of the day and the triumph of the sun over his enemies. It became a Mithraic, and finally a Christian, holy day.

## VII. PERSIAN MANNERS AND MORALS

*Violence and honor—The code of cleanliness—Sins of the flesh—  
Virgins and bachelors—Marriage—Women—Children—  
Persian ideas of education*

Nevertheless it is surprising how much brutality remained in the Medes and the Persians despite their religion. Darius I, their greatest king, writes in the Behistun inscription: "Fravartish was seized and brought to me. I cut off his nose and ears, and I cut out his tongue, and I put out his eyes. At my court he was kept in chains; all the people saw him. Later I crucified him in Ecbatana. . . . Ahura-Mazda was my strong support; under the protection of Ahura-Mazda my army utterly smote the rebellious army, and they seized Citrankakhara and brought him to me. Then I cut off his nose and ears and put out his eyes. He was kept in chains at my court; all the people saw him. Afterwards I crucified him."<sup>98</sup> The murders retailed in Plutarch's life of Artaxerxes II offer a sanguinary specimen of the morals of the later courts. Traitors were dealt with without sentiment: they and their leaders were crucified, their followers were sold as slaves, their towns were pillaged, their boys were castrated, their girls were sold into harems.<sup>99</sup> But it would be unfair to judge the people from their kings; virtue is not news, and virtuous men, like happy nations, have no history. Even the kings showed on occasion a fine generosity, and were known among the faithless Greeks for their fidelity; a treaty made with them could be relied upon, and it was their boast that they never broke their word.<sup>100</sup> It is a testimony to the character of the Persians that whereas any one could hire Greeks to fight Greeks, it was rare indeed that a Persian could be hired to fight Persians.\*

Manners were milder than the blood and iron of history would suggest. The Persians were free and open in speech, generous, warm-hearted and hospitable.<sup>101</sup> Etiquette was almost as punctilious among them as with the Chinese. When equals met they embraced, and kissed each other on the lips; to persons of higher rank they made a deep obeisance; to those of lower rank they offered the cheek; to commoners they bowed.<sup>102</sup> They thought it unbecoming to eat or drink anything in the street, or publicly to spit or blow the nose.<sup>103</sup> Until the reign of Xerxes the people were abstemious in food and drink, eating only one meal per day, and drinking nothing but

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\* When the Persians fought Alexander at the Granicus practically all the "Persian" infantry were Greek mercenaries. At the battle of Issus 30,000 Greek mercenaries formed the center of the Persian line.<sup>104</sup>

water.<sup>108</sup> Cleanliness was rated as the greatest good after life itself. Good works done with dirty hands were worthless; "for while one doth not utterly destroy corruption" ("germs"?), "there is no coming of the angels to his body."<sup>109</sup> Severe penalties were decreed for those who spread contagious diseases. On festal occasions the people gathered together all clothed in white.<sup>101</sup> The Avestan code, like the Brahman and the Mosaic, heaped up ceremonial precautions and ablutions; great arid tracts of the Zoroastrian Scriptures are given over to wearisome formulas for cleansing the body and the soul.<sup>108</sup> Parings of nails, cuttings of hair and exhalations of the breath were marked out as unclean things, which the wise Persian would avoid unless they had been purified.<sup>109</sup>

The code was again Judaically stern against the sins of the flesh. Onanism was to be punished with flogging; and men and women guilty of sexual promiscuity or prostitution "ought to be slain even more than gliding serpents, than howling wolves."<sup>107</sup> That practice kept its usual distance from precept appears from an item in Herodotus: "To carry off women by violence the Persians think is the act of wicked men; but to trouble one's self about avenging them when so carried off is the act of foolish men; and to pay no regard to them when carried off is the act of wise men; for it is clear that if they had not been willing, they could not have been carried off."<sup>108</sup> He adds, elsewhere, that the Persians "have learnt from the Greeks a passion for boys";<sup>109</sup> and though we cannot always trust this supreme reporter, we scent some corroboration of him in the intensity with which the *Avesta* excoriates sodomy; for that deed, it says again and again, there is no forgiveness; "nothing can wash it away."<sup>110</sup>

Virgins and bachelors were not encouraged by the code, but polygamy and concubinage were allowed; a military society has use for many children. "The man who has a wife," says the *Avesta*, "is far above him who lives in continence; he who keeps a house is far above him who has none; he who has children is far above him who has none; he who has riches is far above him who has none";<sup>111</sup> these are criteria of social standing fairly common among the nations. The family is ranked as the holiest of all institutions. "O Maker of the material world," Zarathustra asks Ahura-Mazda, "thou Holy One, which is the second place where the earth feels most happy?" And Ahura-Mazda answers him: "It is the place whereon one of the faithful erects a house with a priest within, with cattle, with a wife, with children, and good herds within; and wherein afterwards the cattle continue to thrive, the wife to thrive, the child to thrive, the fire to thrive, and every blessing of life to thrive."<sup>112</sup> The animal—above all others the dog—was an integral part of the family, as in the last commandment given to Moses. The nearest family was enjoined to take in and care for any homeless

pregnant beast.<sup>122</sup> Severe penalties were prescribed for those who fed unfit food to dogs, or served them their food too hot; and fourteen hundred stripes were the punishment for "smiting a bitch which has been covered by three dogs."<sup>123</sup> The bull was honored for his procreative powers, and prayer and sacrifice were offered to the cow.<sup>124</sup>

Matches were arranged by the parents on the arrival of their children at puberty. The range of choice was wide, for we hear of the marriage of brother and sister, father and daughter, mother and son.<sup>125</sup> Concubines were for the most part a luxury of the rich; the aristocracy never went to war without them.<sup>127</sup> In the later days of the empire the king's harem contained from 329 to 360 concubines, for it had become a custom that no woman might share the royal couch twice unless she was overwhelmingly beautiful.<sup>128</sup>

In the time of the Prophet the position of woman in Persia was high, as ancient manners went: she moved in public freely and unveiled; she owned and managed property, and could, like most modern women, direct the affairs of her husband in his name, or through his pen. After Darius her status declined, especially among the rich. The poorer women retained their freedom of movement, because they had to work; but in other cases the seclusion always enforced in the menstrual periods was extended to the whole social life of woman, and laid the foundations of the Moslem institution of *purdah*. Upper-class women could not venture out except in curtained litters, and were not permitted to mingle publicly with men; married women were forbidden to see even their nearest male relatives, such as their fathers or brothers. Women are never mentioned or represented in the public inscriptions and monuments of ancient Persia. Concubines had greater freedom, since they were employed to entertain their masters' guests. Even in the later reigns women were powerful at the court, rivaling the eunuchs in the persistence of their plotting and the kings in the refinements of their cruelty.<sup>129\*</sup>

Children as well as marriage were indispensable to respectability. Sons were highly valued as economic assets to their parents and military assets to the king; girls were regretted, for they had to be brought up for some other man's home and profit. "Men do not pray for daughters," said the Persians, "and angels do not reckon them among their gifts to mankind."<sup>130</sup>

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\* Statira was a model queen to Artaxerxes II; but his mother, Parysatis, poisoned her out of jealousy, encouraged the king to marry his own daughter Atossa, played dice with him for the life of a eunuch, and, winning, had him flayed alive. When Artaxerxes ordered the execution of a Carian soldier, Parysatis bettered his instructions by having the man stretched upon the rack for ten days, his eyes torn out, and molten lead poured into his ears until he died.<sup>130a</sup>



The king annually sent gifts to every father of many sons, as if in advance payment for their blood.<sup>121</sup> Fornication, even adultery, might be forgiven if there was no abortion; abortion was a worse crime than the others, and was to be punished with death.<sup>122</sup> One of the ancient commentaries, the *Bundabish*, specifies means for avoiding conception, but warns the people against them. "On the nature of generation it is said in Revelation that a woman when she cometh out from menstruation, during ten days and nights, when they go near unto her, readily becometh pregnant."<sup>123</sup>

The child remained under the care of the women till five, and under the care of his father from five to seven; at seven he went to school. Education was mostly confined to the sons of the well-to-do, and was usually administered by priests. Classes met in the temple or the home of the priest; it was a principle never to have a school meet near a market-place, lest the atmosphere of lying, swearing and cheating that prevailed in the bazaars should corrupt the young.<sup>124</sup> The texts were the *Avesta* and its commentaries; the subjects were religion, medicine or law; the method of learning was by commission to memory and by the rote recitation of long passages.<sup>125</sup> Boys of the unpretentious classes were not spoiled with letters, but were taught only three things—to ride a horse, to use the bow, and to speak the truth.<sup>126</sup> Higher education extended to the age of twenty or twenty-four among the sons of the aristocracy; some were especially prepared for public office or provincial administration; all were trained in the art of war. The life in these higher schools was arduous: the students rose early, ran great distances, rode difficult horses at high speed, swam, hunted, pursued thieves, sowed farms, planted trees, made long marches under a hot sun or in bitter cold, and learned to bear every change and rigor of climate, to subsist on coarse foods, and to cross rivers while keeping their clothes and armor dry.<sup>127</sup> It was such a schooling as would have gladdened the heart of Friedrich Nietzsche in those moments when he could forget the bright and varied culture of ancient Greece.

#### VIII. SCIENCE AND ART

*Medicine—Minor arts—The tombs of Cyrus and Darius—The  
palaces of Persepolis—The Frieze of the Archers—  
Estimate of Persian art*

The Persians seem to have deliberately neglected to train their children in any other art than that of life. Literature was a delicacy for which they had small use; science was a commodity which they could import from Babylon. They had a certain relish for poetry and romantic fiction,

but they left these arts to hirelings and inferiors, preferring the exhilaration of keen-witted conversation to the quiet and solitary pleasures of reading and research. Poetry was sung rather than read, and perished with the singers.

Medicine was at first a function of the priests, who practised it on the principle that the Devil had created 99,999 diseases, which should be treated by a combination of magic and hygiene. They resorted more frequently to spells than to drugs, on the ground that the spells, though they might not cure the illness, would not kill the patient—which was more than could be said for the drugs.<sup>128</sup> Nevertheless lay medicine developed along with the growing wealth of Persia, and in the time of Artaxerxes II there was a well-organized guild of physicians and surgeons, whose fees were fixed by law—as in Hammurabi's code—according to the social rank of the patient.<sup>129</sup> Priests were to be treated free. And just as, among ourselves, the medical novice practises for a year or two, as interne, upon the bodies of the immigrant and the poor, so among the Persians a young physician was expected to begin his career by treating infidels and foreigners. The Lord of Light himself had decreed it:

O Maker of the material world, thou Holy One, if a worshiper of God wish to practice the art of healing, on whom shall he first prove his skill—on the worshipers of Ahura-Mazda, or on the worshipers of the *Daevas* (the evil spirits)? Ahura-Mazda made answer and said: On worshipers of the *Daevas* shall he prove himself, rather than on worshipers of God. If he treat with the knife a worshiper of the *Daevas* and he die; if he treat with the knife a second worshiper of the *Daevas* and he die; if he treat with the knife a third worshiper of the *Daevas* and he die, he is unfit forever and ever; let him never attend any worshiper of God. . . . If he treat with the knife a worshiper of the *Daevas* and he recover; if he treat with the knife a second worshiper of the *Daevas* and he recover; if he treat with the knife a third worshiper of the *Daevas* and he recover; then he is fit forever and ever; he may at his will treat worshipers of God, and heal them with the knife.<sup>130</sup>

Having dedicated themselves to empire, the Persians found their time and energies taken up with war, and, like the Romans, depended largely upon imports for their art. They had a taste for pretty things, but they relied upon foreign or foreign-born artists to produce them, and upon

provincial revenues to pay for them. They had beautiful homes and luxuriant gardens, which sometimes became hunting-parks or zoological collections; they had costly furniture—tables plated or inlaid with silver or gold, couches spread with exotic coverlets, floors carpeted with rugs resilient in texture and rich in all the colors of earth and sky;<sup>181</sup> they drank from golden goblets, and adorned their tables or their shelves with vases turned by foreign hands;\* they liked song and dance, and the playing of the harp, the flute, the drum and the tambourine. Jewelry abounded, from tiaras and ear-rings to golden anklets and shoes; even the men flaunted jewels on necks and ears and arms. Pearls, rubies, emeralds and *lapis lazuli* came from abroad, but turquoise came from the Persian mines, and contributed the customary material for the aristocrat's signet-ring. Gems of monstrous and grotesque form copied the supposed features of favorite devils. The king sat on a golden throne covered with golden canopies upheld with pillars of gold.<sup>182</sup>

Only in architecture did the Persians achieve a style of their own. Under Cyrus, Darius I and Xerxes I they erected tombs and palaces which archeology has very incompletely exhumed; and it may be that those prying historians, the pick and the shovel, will in the near future raise our estimate of Persian art.† At Pasargadæ Alexander spared for us, with characteristic graciousness, the tomb of Cyrus I. The caravan road now crosses the bare platform that once bore the palaces of Cyrus and his mad son; of these nothing survives except a few broken columns here and there, or a door-jamb bearing the features of Cyrus in bas-relief. Nearby, on the plain, is the tomb, showing the wear of twenty-four centuries: a simple stone chapel, quite Greek in restraint and form, rising to some thirty-five feet in height upon a terraced base. Once, surely, it was a loftier monument, with some fitting pedestal; today it seems a little bare and forlorn, having the shape but hardly the substance of beauty; the cracked and ruined stones merely chasten us with the quiet permanence of the inanimate. Far south, at Naksh-i-Rustam, near Persepolis, is the tomb of Darius I, cut like some Hindu chapel into the face of the moun-

\* One of these vases, shown at the International Exhibition of Persian Art in London, 1931, bears an inscription testifying that it belonged to Artaxerxes II.<sup>182</sup>

† An expedition of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago is now engaged in excavating Persepolis under the direction of Dr. James H. Breasted. In January, 1931, this expedition unearthed a mass of statuary equal in amount to all Persian sculptures previously known.<sup>183</sup>

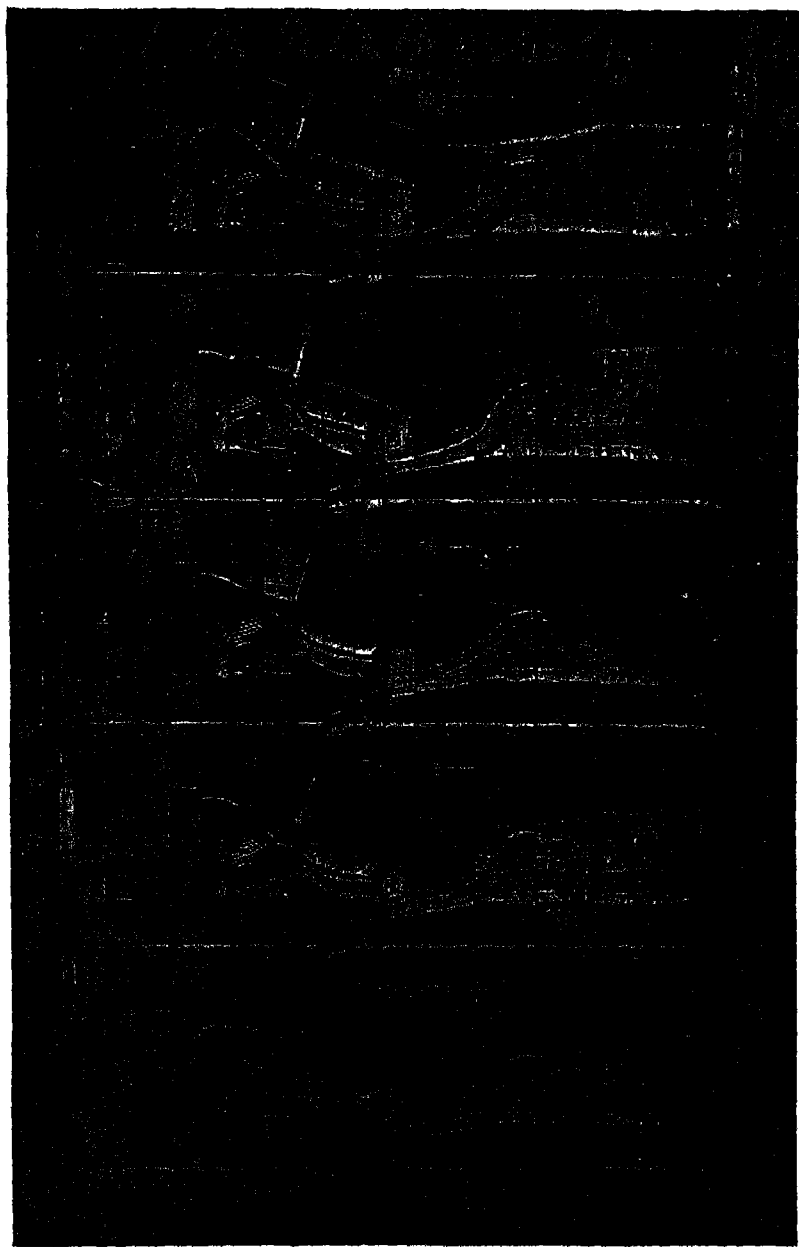


FIG. 38.—“Frieze of the Archers.” Painted tile-relief from Susa  
Louvre; photo by Archives Photographiques d’Art et d’Histoire



tain rock. The entrance is carved to simulate a palace façade, with four slender columns about a modest portal; above it, as if on a roof, figures representing the subject peoples of Persia support a dais on which the King is shown worshiping Ahura-Mazda and the moon. It is conceived and executed with aristocratic refinement and simplicity.

The rest of such Persian architecture as has survived the wars, raids, thefts and weather of two millenniums is composed of palace ruins. At Ecbatana the early kings built a royal residence of cedar and cypress, plated with metal, which still stood in the days of Polybius (ca. 150 B.C.), but of which no sign remains. The most imposing relics of ancient Persia, now rising day by day out of the grasping and secretive earth, are the stone steps, platform and columns at Persepolis; for there each monarch from Darius onward built a palace to defer the oblivion of his name. The great external stairs that mounted from the plain to the elevation on which the buildings rested were unlike anything else in architectural records; derived, presumably, from the flights of steps that approached and encircled the Mesopotamian *ziggurats*, they had nevertheless a character specifically their own—so gradual in ascent and so spacious that ten horsemen could mount them abreast<sup>\*185</sup> They must have formed a brilliant approach to the vast platform, twenty to fifty feet high, fifteen hundred feet long and one thousand feet wide, that bore the royal palaces.† Where the two flights of steps, coming from either side, met at their summit, stood a gateway, or propyleum, flanked by winged and human-headed bulls in the worst Assyrian style. At the right stood the masterpiece of Persian architecture—the Chehil Minar or Great Hall of Xerxes I, covering, with its roomy antechambers, an area of more than a hundred thousand square feet—vaster, if size mattered, than vast Karnak, or any European cathedral except Milan's.<sup>186</sup> Another flight of steps led to this Great Hall; these stairs were flanked with ornamental parapets, and their supporting sides were carved with the finest bas-reliefs yet discovered in Persia.<sup>187</sup> Thirteen of the once seventy-two columns of Xerxes' palace stand among the ruins, like palm-trees in some desolate oasis; and these marble columns, though mutilated, are among the nearly perfect works of man. They are slenderer than any columns of Egypt or Greece, and rise to the unusual height

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\* Fergusson pronounced them "the noblest example of a flight of stairs to be found in any part of the world."<sup>185</sup>

† Underneath the platform ran a complicated system of drainage tunnels, six feet in diameter, often drilled through the solid rock.<sup>187</sup>

of sixty-four feet. Their shafts are fluted with forty-eight small grooves; their bases resemble bells overlaid with inverted leaves; their capitals for the most part take the form of floral—almost “Ionic” volutes, surmounted by the forequarters of two bulls or unicorns upon whose necks, joined back to back, rested the crossbeam or architrave. This was surely of wood, for such fragile columns, so wide apart, could hardly have supported a stone entablature. The door-jambs and window-frames were of ornamented black stone that shone like ebony; the walls were of brick, but they were covered with enameled tiles painted in brilliant panels of animals and flowers; the columns, pilasters and steps were of fine white limestone or hard blue marble. Behind, or east of, this Chehil Minar rose the “Hall of a Hundred Columns”; nothing remains of it but one pillar and the outlines of the general plan. Possibly these palaces were the most beautiful ever erected in the ancient or modern world.

At Susa the Artaxerxes I and II built palaces of which only the foundations survive. They were constructed of brick, redeemed by the finest glazed tiles known; from Susa comes the famous “Frieze of the Archers”—probably the faithful “Immortals” who guarded the king. The stately bowmen seem dressed rather for court ceremony than for war; their tunics resound with bright colors, their hair and beards are wondrously curled, their hands bear proudly and stiffly their official staffs. In Susa, as in the other capitals, painting and sculpture were dependent arts serving architecture, and the statuary was mostly the work of artists imported from Assyria, Babylonia and Greece.<sup>100</sup>

One might say of Persian art, as perhaps of nearly every art, that all the elements of it were borrowed. The tomb of Cyrus took its form from Lydia, the slender stone columns improved upon the like pillars of Assyria, the colonnades and bas-reliefs acknowledged their inspiration from Egypt, the animal capitals were an infection from Nineveh and Babylon. It was the *ensemble* that made Persian architecture individual and different—an aristocratic taste that refined the overwhelming columns of Egypt and the heavy masses of Mesopotamia into the brilliance and elegance, the proportion and harmony of Persepolis. The Greeks would hear with wonder and admiration of these halls and palaces; their busy travelers and observant diplomats would bring them stimulating word of the art and luxury of Persia. Soon they would transform the double volutes and stiff-necked animals of these graceful pillars into the smooth lobes of the Ionic capital; and they would shorten and strengthen the shafts to make them bear any entablature, whether of wood or of stone.

Architecturally there was but a step from Persepolis to Athens. All the Near Eastern world, about to die for a thousand years, prepared to lay its heritage at the feet of Greece.

#### IX. DECADENCE

*How a nation may die—Xerxes—A paragraph of murders—Artaxerxes II—Cyrus the Younger—Darius the Little—Causes of decay: political, military, moral—Alexander conquers Persia, and advances upon India*

The empire of Darius lasted hardly a century. The moral as well as the physical backbone of Persia was broken by Marathon, Salamis and Plataea; the emperors exchanged Mars for Venus, and the nation descended into corruption and apathy. The decline of Persia anticipated almost in detail the decline of Rome: immorality and degeneration among the people accompanied violence and negligence on the throne. The Persians, like the Medes before them, passed from stoicism to epicureanism in a few generations. Eating became the principal occupation of the aristocracy: these men who had once made it a rule to eat but once a day now interpreted the rule to allow them one meal—prolonged from noon to night; they stocked their larders with a thousand delicacies, and often served entire animals to their guests; they stuffed themselves with rich rare meats, and spent their genius upon new sauces and desserts.<sup>140a</sup> A corrupt and corrupting multitude of menials filled the houses of the wealthy, while drunkenness became the common vice of every class.<sup>140b</sup> Cyrus and Darius created Persia, Xerxes inherited it, his successors destroyed it.

Xerxes I was every inch a king—externally; tall and vigorous, he was by royal consent the handsomest man in his empire.<sup>141</sup> But there was never yet a handsome man who was not vain, nor any physically vain man whom some woman has not led by the nose. Xerxes was divided by many mistresses, and became for his people an exemplar of sensuality. His defeat at Salamis was in the nature of things; for he was great only in his love of magnitude, not in his capacity to rise to a crisis or to be in fact and need a king. After twenty years of sexual intrigue and administrative indolence he was murdered by a courtier, Artabanus, and was buried with regal pomp and general satisfaction.

Only the records of Rome after Tiberius could rival in bloodiness the royal annals of Persia. The murderer of Xerxes was murdered by



Artaxerxes I, who, after a long reign, was succeeded by Xerxes II, who was murdered a few weeks later by his half-brother Sogdianus, who was murdered six months later by Darius II, who suppressed the revolt of Terituchmes by having him slain, his wife cut into pieces, and his mother, brothers and sisters buried alive. Darius II was followed by his son Artaxerxes II, who at the battle of Cunaxa, had to fight to the death his own brother, the younger Cyrus, when the youth tried to seize the royal power. Artaxerxes II enjoyed a long reign, killed his son Darius for conspiracy, and died of a broken heart on finding that another son, Ochus, was planning to assassinate him. Ochus ruled for twenty years, and was poisoned by his general Bagoas. This iron-livered Warwick placed Arses, son of Ochus, on the throne, assassinated Arses' brothers to make Arses secure, then assassinated Arses and his infant children, and gave the sceptre to Codomannus, a safely effeminate friend. Codomannus reigned for eight years under the name of Darius III, and died in battle against Alexander at Arbela, in the final ruin of his country. Not even the democracies of our time have known such indiscriminate leadership.

It is in the nature of an empire to disintegrate soon, for the energy that created it disappears from those who inherit it, at the very time that its subject peoples are gathering strength to fight for their lost liberty. Nor is it natural that nations diverse in language, religion, morals and traditions should long remain united; there is nothing organic in such a union, and compulsion must repeatedly be applied to maintain the artificial bond. In its two hundred years of empire Persia did nothing to lessen this heterogeneity, these centrifugal forces; she was content to rule a mob of nations, and never thought of making them into a state. Year by year the union became more difficult to preserve. As the vigor of the emperors relaxed, the boldness and ambition of the satraps grew; they purchased or intimidated the generals and secretaries who were supposed to share and limit their power, they arbitrarily enlarged their armies and revenues, and engaged in recurrent plots against the king. The frequency of revolt and war exhausted the vitality of little Persia; the braver stocks were slaughtered in battle after battle, until none but the cautious survived; and when these were conscripted to face Alexander they proved to be cowards almost to a man. No improvements had been made in the training or equipment of the troops, or in the tactics of the generals; these blundered childishly against Alexander, while their disorderly ranks, armed mostly with darts, proved to be mere targets

for the long spears and solid phalanxes of the Macedonians.<sup>119</sup> Alexander frolicked, but only after the battle was won; the Persian leaders brought their concubines with them, and had no ambition for war. The only real soldiers in the Persian army were the Greeks.

From the day when Xerxes turned back defeated from Salamis, it became evident that Greece would one day challenge the empire. Persia controlled one end of the great trade route that bound western Asia with the Mediterranean, Greece controlled the other; and the ancient acquisitiveness and ambition of men made such a situation provocative of war. As soon as Greece found a master who could give her unity, she would attack.

Alexander crossed the Hellespont without opposition, having what seemed to Asia a negligible force of 30,000 footmen and 5,000 cavalry.\* A Persian army of 40,000 troops tried to stop him at the Granicus; the Greeks lost 115 men, the Persians 20,000.<sup>120</sup> Alexander marched south and east, taking cities and receiving surrenders for a year. Meanwhile Darius III gathered a horde of 600,000 soldiers and adventurers; five days were required to march them over a bridge of boats across the Euphrates; six hundred mules and three hundred camels were needed to carry the royal purse.<sup>121</sup> When the two armies met at Issus Alexander had no more than 30,000 followers; but Darius, with all the stupidity that destiny could require, had chosen a field in which only a small part of his multitude could fight at one time. When the slaughter was over the Macedonians had lost some 450, the Persians 110,000 men, most of these being slain in wild retreat; Alexander, in reckless pursuit, crossed a stream on a bridge of Persian corpses.<sup>122</sup> Darius fled ignominiously, abandoning his mother, a wife, two daughters, his chariot, and his luxuriously appointed tent. Alexander treated the Persian ladies with a chivalry that surprised the Greek historians, contenting himself with marrying one of the daughters. If we may believe Quintus Curtius, the mother of Darius became so fond of Alexander that after his death she put an end to her own life by voluntary starvation.<sup>123</sup>

The young conqueror turned aside now with what seemed foolhardy leisureliness to establish his control over all of western Asia; he did not wish to advance farther without organizing his conquests and building a secure line of communications. The citizens of Babylon, like those of

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\* "All those that were in Asia," says Josephus, "were persuaded that the Macedonians would not so much as come to battle with the Persians, on account of their multitude."<sup>124</sup>

Jerusalem, came out *en masse* to welcome him, offering him their city and their gold; he accepted these graciously, and pleased them by restoring the temples which the unwise Xerxes had destroyed. Darius sent him a proposal of peace, saying that he would give Alexander ten thousand talents\* for the safe return of his mother, his wife and his children, would offer him his daughter in marriage, and would acknowledge his sovereignty over all Asia west of the Euphrates, if only Alexander would end the war and become his friend. Parmenio, second in command among the Greeks, said that if he were Alexander he would be glad to accept such happy terms, and avoid with honor the hazard of some disastrous defeat. Alexander remarked that he would do likewise—if he were Parmenio. Being Alexander, he answered Darius that his offer meant nothing, since he, Alexander, already possessed such of Asia as Darius proposed to cede to him, and could marry the daughter of the emperor when he pleased. Darius, despairing of peace with so reckless a logician, turned unwillingly to the task of collecting another and larger force.

Meanwhile Alexander had taken Tyre, and annexed Egypt; now he marched back across the great empire, straight to its distant capitals. In twenty days from Babylon his army reached Susa, and took it without resistance; thence it advanced so quickly to Persepolis that the guards of the royal treasury had no time to secrete its funds. There Alexander committed one of the most unworthy acts of his incredible career: against the counsel of Parmenio, and (we are told) to please the courtesan Thais,† he burned the palaces of Persepolis to the ground, and permitted his troops to loot the city. Then, having raised the spirits of his army with booty and gifts, he turned north to meet Darius for the last time.

Darius had gathered, chiefly from his eastern provinces, a new army of a million men<sup>148</sup>—Persians, Medes, Babylonians, Syrians, Armenians, Cappadocians, Bactrians, Sogdians, Arachosians, Sacæ and Hindus—and had equipped them no longer with bows and arrows, but with javelins, spears, shields, horses, elephants, and scythe-wielding chariots intended to mow down the enemy like wheat; with this vast force old Asia would make one more effort to preserve itself from adolescent Europe. Alexander, with 7,000 cavalry and 40,000 infantry, met the motley mob at

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\* Probably equivalent to \$150,000,000 in contemporary currencies.

† Plutarch, Quintus Curtius and Diodorus agree on this tale, and it does not do violence to Alexander's impetuous character; but one may meet the story with a certain scepticism none the less.

Gaugamela,\* and by superior weapons, generalship and courage destroyed it in a day. Darius again chose the better part of valor, but his generals, disgusted with this second flight, murdered him in his tent. Alexander put to death such of the assassins as he could find, sent the body of Darius in state to Persepolis, and ordered it to be buried in the manner of the Achæmenid kings. The Persian people flocked readily to the standard of the conquerer, charmed by his generosity and his youth. Alexander organized Persia into a province of the Macedonian Empire, left a strong garrison to guard it, and marched on to India.

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\*A town sixty miles from the Arbela which gave the battle its name.



## BOOK TWO

### INDIA AND HER NEIGHBORS

"The highest truth is this: God is present in all beings. They are His multiple forms. There is no other God to seek. . . . It is a man-making religion that we want. . . . Give up these weakening mysticisms, and be strong. . . . For the next fifty years. . . . let all other gods disappear from our minds. This is the only God that is awake, our own race, everywhere His hands, everywhere His feet, everywhere His ears; He covers everything. . . . The first of all worships is the worship of those all around us. . . . He alone serves God who serves all other beings."

—*Vivekananda*.<sup>1</sup>



## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF INDIAN HISTORY\*

	A.D.
4000: Neolithic Culture in Mysore	1008: Mahmud invades India
2900: Culture of Mohenjo-daro	1076-1126: Vikramaditya Chalukya
1600: Aryan invasion of India	1114: Bhaskara, mathematician
1000-500: Formation of the <i>Vedas</i>	1150: Building of Angkor Wat
800-500: The <i>Upanishads</i>	1186: Turkish invasion of India
599-527: Mahavira, founder of Jainism	1206-1526: The <i>Sultanate of Delhi</i>
563-483: Buddha	1206-1210: Sultan Kutbu-d Din Aibak
500: Sushruta, physician	1288-1293: Marco Polo in India
500: Kapila and the <i>Sankhya</i> Philosophy	1296-1315: Sultan Alau-d-din
500: The earliest <i>Puranas</i>	1303: Alau-d-din takes Chitor
329: Greek invasion of India	1325-1351: Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlak
325: Alexander leaves India	1336: Foundation of Vijayanagar
322-185: The <i>Maurya Dynasty</i>	1336-1405: Timur (Tamerlane)
322-298: Chandragupta Maurya	1351-1388: Sultan Firoz Shah
298-302: Megasthenes at Pataliputra	1398: Timur invades India
273-232: Ashoka	1440-1518: Kabir, poet
A.D. 120: Kanishka, Kushan King	1469-1538: Baba Nanak, founder of the Sikhs
120: Charaka, physician	1483-1530: Babur founds the <i>Mogul Dynasty</i>
320-530: The <i>Gupta Dynasty</i>	1483-1573: Sur Das, poet
320-330: Chandragupta I	1498: Vasco da Gama reaches India
330-380: Samudragupta	1509-1529: Krishna deva Raya rules Vijayanagar
380-413: Vikramaditya	1510: Portuguese occupy Goa
399-414: Fa-Hien in India	1530-1542: Humayun
100-700: Temples and frescoes of Ajanta	1532-1624: Tulsi Das, poet
400: Kalidasa, poet and dramatist	1542-1545: Sher Shah
455-500: Hun invasion of India	1555-1556: Restoration and death of Humayun
499: Aryabhata, mathematician	1560-1605: Akbar
505-587: Varahamihira, astronomer	1565: Fall of Vijayanagar at Talikota
598-660: Brahmagupta, astronomer	1600: Foundation of East India Co.
606-648: King Harsha-Vardhana	1605-1627: Jehangir
608-642: Pulakeshin II, Chalukyan King	1628-1658: Shah Jehan
629-645: Yuan Chwang in India	1631: Death of Mumtaz Mahal
629-50: Srong-tsan Gampo, King of Tibet	1632-1653: Building of the Taj Mahal
630-800: Golden Age of Tibet	1658-1707: Aurangzeb
639: Srong-tsan Gampo founds Lhasa	1674: The French found Pondicherry
712: Arab conquest of Sind	1674-1680: Raja Shivaji
750: Rise of the Pallava Kingdom	1690: The English found Calcutta
750-780: Building of Borobudur, Java	1756-1763: French-English War in India
760: The Kailasha Temple	1757: Battle of Plassey
788-820: Shankara, <i>Vedanta</i> philosopher	1765-1767: Robert Clive, Gov. of Bengal
800-1300: Golden Age of Cambodia	1772-1774: Warren Hastings, Gov. of Bengal
800-1400: Golden Age of of Rajputana	1788-1795: Trial of Warren Hastings
900: Rise of the Chola Kingdom	
973-1048: Alberuni, Arab scholar	
993: Foundation of Delhi	
997-1030: Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni	

\* Dates before 1600 A.D. are uncertain; dates before 329 B.C. are guesswork.



## CHRONOLOGICAL TABLE OF INDIAN HISTORY

A.D.	A.D.
1786-1793: Lord Cornwallis, Gov. of Bengal	1863-1902: Vivekananda (Narendranath Dutt)
1798-1805: Marquess Wellesley, Gov. of Bengal	1869: Birth of Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi
1828-1835: Lord William Cavendish-Bentinck, Governor-General of India	1875: Dayananda founds the <i>Arya-Somaj</i> .
1828: Ram Mohun Roy founds the <i>Brahma-Somaj</i>	1880-1884: Marquess of Ripon, Viceroy
1829: Abolition of suttee	1885: Foundation of India National Congress
1836-1886: Ramakrishna	1889-1905: Baron Curzon, Viceroy
1857: The Sepoy Mutiny	1916-1921: Baron Chelmsford, Viceroy
A.D. 1858: India taken over by the British Crown	1919: Amritsar
1861: Birth of Rabindranath Tagore	1921-1926: Earl of Reading, Viceroy
	1926-1931: Lord Irwin, Viceroy
	1931- : Lord Willingdon, Viceroy

# The Foundations of India

## I. SCENE OF THE DRAMA

*The rediscovery of India—A glance at the map—Climatic influences*

NOTHING should more deeply shame the modern student than the recency and inadequacy of his acquaintance with India. Here is a vast peninsula of nearly two million square miles; two-thirds as large as the United States, and twenty times the size of its master, Great Britain; 320,000,000 souls, more than in all North and South America combined, or one-fifth of the population of the earth; an impressive continuity of development and civilization from Mohenjo-daro, 2900 B.C. or earlier, to Gandhi, Raman and Tagore; faiths compassing every stage from barbarous idolatry to the most subtle and spiritual pantheism; philosophers playing a thousand variations on one monistic theme from the *Upanishads* eight centuries before Christ to Shankara eight centuries after him; scientists developing astronomy three thousand years ago, and winning Nobel prizes in our own time; a democratic constitution of untraceable antiquity in the villages, and wise and beneficent rulers like Ashoka and Akbar in the capitals; minstrels singing great epics almost as old as Homer, and poets holding world audiences today; artists raising gigantic temples for Hindu gods from Tibet to Ceylon and from Cambodia to Java, or carving perfect palaces by the score for Mogul kings and queens—this is the India that patient scholarship is now opening up, like a new intellectual continent, to that Western mind which only yesterday thought civilization an exclusively European thing.\*

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\* From the time of Megasthenes, who described India to Greece ca. 302 B.C., down to the eighteenth century, India was all a marvel and a mystery to Europe. Marco Polo (1254-1323 A.D.) pictured its western fringe vaguely, Columbus blundered upon America in trying to reach it, Vasco da Gama sailed around Africa to rediscover it, and merchants spoke rapaciously of "the wealth of the Indies." But scholars left the mine almost untapped. A Dutch missionary to India, Abraham Roger, made a beginning with his *Open Door to the Hidden Heathendom* (1651); Dryden showed his alertness by writing the play *Aurangzeb* (1675); and an Austrian monk, Fra Paolino de S. Bartolomeo, advanced

The scene of the history is a great triangle narrowing down from the everlasting snows of the Himalayas to the eternal heat of Ceylon. In a corner at the left lies Persia, close akin to Vedic India in people, language and gods. Following the northern frontier eastward we strike Afghanistan; here is Kandahar, the ancient Gandhara, where Greek and Hindu\* sculpture fused for a while, and then parted never to meet again; and north of it is Kabul, from which the Moslems and the Moguls made those bloody raids that gave them India for a thousand years. Within the Indian frontier, a short day's ride from Kabul, is Peshawar, where the old northern habit of invading the south still persists. Note how near to India Russia comes at the Pamirs and the passes of the Hindu Kush; hereby will hang much politics. Directly at the northern tip of India is the province of Kashmir, whose very name recalls the ancient glory of India's textile crafts. South of it is the Punjab—i.e., "Land of the Five Rivers"—with the great city of Lahore, and Shimla, summer capital at the foot of the Himalayas ("Home of the Snow"). Through the western Punjab runs the mighty river Indus, a thousand miles in length;

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the matter with two Sanskrit grammars and a treatise on the *Systema Brahmanicum* (1792).<sup>14</sup> In 1789 Sir William Jones opened his career as one of the greatest of Indologists by translating Kalidasa's *Shakuntala*; this translation, re-rendered into German in 1791, profoundly affected Herder and Goethe, and—through the Schlegels—the entire Romantic movement, which hoped to find in the East all the mysticism and mystery that seemed to have died on the approach of science and Enlightenment in the West. Jones startled the world of scholarship by declaring that Sanskrit was cousin to all the languages of Europe, and an indication of our racial kinship with the Vedic Hindus; these announcements almost created modern philology and ethnology. In 1805 Colebrooke's essay *On the Vedas* revealed to Europe the oldest product of Indian literature; and about the same time Anquetil-Duperron's translation of a Persian translation of the *Upanishads* acquainted Schelling and Schopenhauer with what the latter called the profoundest philosophy that he had ever read.<sup>15</sup> Buddhism was practically unknown as a system of thought until Burnouf's *Essai sur le Pali* (1826)—i.e., on the language of the Buddhist documents. Burnouf in France, and his pupil Max Müller in England, roused scholars and philanthropists to make possible a translation of all the "Sacred Books of the East"; and Rhys Davids furthered this task by a lifetime devoted to the exposition of the literature of Buddhism. Despite and because of these labors it has become clear that we have merely begun to know India; our acquaintance with its literature is as limited as Europe's knowledge of Greek and Roman literature in the days of Charlemagne. Today, in the enthusiasm of our discovery, we exaggerate generously the value of the new revelation; a European philosopher believes that "Indian wisdom is the profoundest that exists"; and a great novelist writes: "I have not found, in Europe or America, poets, thinkers or popular leaders equal, or even comparable, to those of India today."<sup>16</sup>

\*The word *Indian* will be used in this Book as applying to India in general; the word *Hindu*, for variety's sake, will occasionally be used in the same sense, following the custom of the Persians and the Greeks; but where any confusion might result, *Hindu* will be used in its later and stricter sense, as referring only to those inhabitants of India who (as distinct from Moslem Indians) accept one of the native faiths.

its name came from the native word for river, *sindhu*, which the Persians (changing it to *Hindu*) applied to all northern India in their word *Hindustan*—i.e., "Land of the Rivers." Out of this Persian term *Hindu* the invading Greeks made for us the word *India*.

From the Punjab the Jumna and the Ganges flow leisurely to the south-east; the Jumna waters the new capital at Delhi, and mirrors the Taj Mahal at Agra; the Ganges broadens down to the Holy City, Benares, washes ten million devotees daily, and fertilizes with its dozen mouths the province of Bengal and the old British capital at Calcutta. Still farther east is Burma, with the golden pagodas of Rangoon and the sunlit road to Mandalay. From Mandalay back across India to the western airport at Karachi is almost as long a flight as from New York to Los Angeles. South of the Indus, on such a flight, one would pass over Rajputana, land of the heroic Rajputs, with its famed cities of Gwalior and Chitor, Jaipur, Ajmer and Udaipur. South and west is the "Presidency" or province of Bombay, with teeming cities at Surat, Ahmedabad, Bombay and Poona. East and south lie the progressive native-ruled states of Hyderabad and Mysore, with picturesque capitals of the same names. On the west coast is Goa, and on the eastern coast is Pondicherry, where the conquering British have left to the Portuguese and the French respectively a few square miles of territorial consolation. Along the Bay of Bengal the Madras Presidency runs, with the well-governed city of Madras as its center, and the sublime and gloomy temples of Tanjore, Trichinopoly, Madura and Rameshvaram adorning its southern boundaries. And then "Adam's Bridge"—a reef of sunken islands—beckons us across the strait to Ceylon, where civilization flourished sixteen hundred years ago. All these are a little part of India.

We must conceive it, then, not as a nation, like Egypt, Babylonia, or England, but as a continent as populous and polyglot as Europe, and almost as varied in climate and race, in literature, philosophy and art. The north is harassed by cold blasts from the Himalayas, and by the fogs that form when these blasts meet the southern sun. In the Punjab the rivers have created great alluvial plains of unsurpassed fertility;<sup>4</sup> but south of the river-valleys the sun rules as an unchecked despot, the plains are dry and bare, and require for their fruitful tillage no mere husbandry but an almost stupefying slavery.<sup>5</sup> Englishmen do not stay in India more than five years at a time; and if a hundred thousand of them rule three thousand times their number of Hindus it is because they have not stayed there long enough.

Here and there, constituting one-fifth of the land, the primitive jungle remains, a breeding-place of tigers, leopards, wolves and snakes. In the

southern third, or Deccan,\* the heat is drier, or is tempered with breezes from the sea. But from Delhi to Ceylon the dominating fact in India is heat: heat that has weakened the physique, shortened the youth, and affected the quietist religion and philosophy of the inhabitants. The only relief from this heat is to sit still, to do nothing, to desire nothing; or in the summer months the monsoon wind may bring cooling moisture and fertilizing rain from the sea. When the monsoon fails to blow, India starves, and dreams of Nirvana.

## II. THE OLDEST CIVILIZATION?

### *Prehistoric India—Mohenjo-daro—Its antiquity*

In the days when historians supposed that history had begun with Greece, Europe gladly believed that India had been a hotbed of barbarism until the "Aryan" cousins of the European peoples had migrated from the shores of the Caspian to bring the arts and sciences to a savage and benighted peninsula. Recent researches have marred this comforting picture—as future researches will change the perspective of these pages. In India, as elsewhere, the beginnings of civilization are buried in the earth, and not all the spades of archeology will ever quite exhume them. Remains of an Old Stone Age fill many cases in the museums of Calcutta, Madras and Bombay; and neolithic objects have been found in nearly every state.<sup>o</sup> These, however, were cultures, not yet a civilization.

In 1924 the world of scholarship was again aroused by news from India: Sir John Marshall announced that his Indian aides, R. D. Banerji in particular, had discovered at Mohenjo-daro, on the western bank of the lower Indus, remains of what seemed to be an older civilization than any yet known to historians. There, and at Harappa, a few hundred miles to the north, four or five superimposed cities were excavated, with hundreds of solidly-built brick houses and shops, ranged along wide streets as well as narrow lanes, and rising in many cases to several stories. Let Sir John estimate the age of these remains:

These discoveries establish the existence in Sind (the northernmost province of the Bombay Presidency) and the Punjab, during the fourth and third millennium B.C., of a highly developed city life; and

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\* From *dakshina*, "right hand" (Latin *dexter*); secondarily meaning "south," since southern India is on the right hand of a worshiper facing the rising sun.

the presence, in many of the houses, of wells and bathrooms as well as an elaborate drainage-system, betoken a social condition of the citizens at least equal to that found in Sumer, and superior to that prevailing in contemporary Babylonia and Egypt. . . . Even at Ur the houses are by no means equal in point of construction to those of Mohenjo-daro.<sup>7</sup>

Among the finds at these sites were household utensils and toilet outfits; pottery painted and plain, hand-turned and turned on the wheel; terracottas, dice and chess-men; coins older than any previously known; over a thousand seals, most of them engraved, and inscribed in an unknown pictographic script; *faïence* work of excellent quality; stone carving superior to that of the Sumerians;<sup>8</sup> copper weapons and implements, and a copper model of a two-wheeled cart (now our oldest example of a wheeled vehicle); gold and silver bangles, ear-ornaments, necklaces, and other jewelry "so well finished and so highly polished," says Marshall, "that they might have come out of a Bond Street jeweler's of today rather than from a prehistoric house of 5,000 years ago."<sup>9</sup>

Strange to say, the lowest strata of these remains showed a more developed art than the upper layers—as if even the most ancient deposits were from a civilization already hundreds, perhaps thousands, of years old. Some of the implements were of stone, some of copper, some of bronze, suggesting that this Indus culture had arisen in a Chalcolithic Age—i.e., in a transition from stone to bronze as the material of tools.<sup>10</sup> The indications are that Mohenjo-daro was at its height when Cheops built the first great pyramid; that it had commercial, religious and artistic connections with Sumeria and Babylonia;<sup>\*</sup> and that it survived over three thousand years, until the third century before Christ.<sup>†</sup><sup>11</sup> We cannot tell

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\* These connections are suggested by similar seals found at Mohenjo-daro and in Sumeria (especially at Kish), and by the appearance of the Naga, or hooded serpent, among the early Mesopotamian seals.<sup>12</sup> In 1932 Dr. Henri Frankfort unearthed, in the ruins of a Babylonian-Elamite village at the modern Tell-Asmar (near Baghdad), pottery seals and beads which in his judgment (Sir John Marshall concurring) were imported from Mohenjo-daro ca. 2000 B.C.<sup>13</sup>

† Macdonell believes that this amazing civilization was derived from Sumeria;<sup>14</sup> Hall believes that the Sumerians derived their culture from India;<sup>15</sup> Woolley derives both the Sumerians and the early Hindus from some common parent stock and culture in or near Baluchistan.<sup>16</sup> Investigators have been struck by the fact that similar seals found both in Babylonia and in India belong to the *earliest* ("pre-Sumerian") phase of the Mesopotamian culture, but to the *latest* phase of the Indus civilization<sup>17</sup>—which suggests the priority of India. Childe inclines to this conclusion: "By the end of the fourth millennium

yet whether, as Marshall believes, Mohenjo-daro represents the oldest of all civilizations known. But the exhuming of prehistoric India has just begun; only in our time has archeology turned from Egypt across Mesopotamia to India. When the soil of India has been turned up like that of Egypt we shall probably find there a civilization older than that which flowered out of the mud of the Nile.\*

### III. THE INDO-ARYANS

*The natives—The invaders—The village community—Caste—Warriors—Priests—Merchants—Workers—Outcastes*

Despite the continuity of the remains in Sind and Mysore, we feel that between the heyday of Mohenjo-daro and the advent of the Aryans a great gap stands in our knowledge; or rather that our knowledge of the past is an occasional gap in our ignorance. Among the Indus relics is a peculiar seal, composed of two serpent heads, which was the characteristic symbol of the oldest historic people of India—those serpent-worshipping Nagas whom the invading Aryans found in possession of the northern provinces, and whose descendants still linger in the remoter hills.<sup>20</sup> Farther south the land was occupied by a dark-skinned, broad-nosed people whom, without knowing the origin of the word, we call Dravidians. They were already a civilized people when the Aryans broke down upon them; their adventurous merchants sailed the sea even to Sumeria and Babylon, and their cities knew many refinements and luxuries.<sup>21</sup> It was from them, apparently, that the Aryans took their village community and their systems of land-tenure and taxation.<sup>22</sup> To this day the Deccan is still essentially Dravidian in stock and customs, in language, literature and arts.

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B.C. the *material* culture of Abydos, Ur, or Mohenjo-daro would stand comparison with that of Periclean Athens or of any medieval town. . . . Judging by the domestic architecture, the seal-cutting, and the grace of the pottery, the Indus civilization was ahead of the Babylonian at the beginning of the third millennium (ca. 3000 B.C.). But that was a late phase of the Indian culture; it may have enjoyed no less lead in earlier times. Were then the innovations and discoveries that characterize proto-Sumerian civilization not native developments on Babylonian soil, but the results of Indian inspiration? If so, had the Sumerians themselves come from the Indus, or at least from regions in its immediate sphere of influence?<sup>23</sup> These fascinating questions cannot yet be answered; but they serve to remind us that a history of civilization, because of our human ignorance, begins at what was probably a late point in the actual development of culture.

\* Recent excavations near Chitaldug, in Mysore, revealed six levels of buried cultures, rising from Stone Age implements and geometrically adorned pottery apparently as old as 4000 B.C., to remains as late as 1200 A.D.<sup>24</sup>

The invasion and conquest of these flourishing tribes by the Aryans was part of that ancient process whereby, periodically, the north has swept down violently upon the settled and pacified south; this has been one of the main streams of history, on which civilizations have risen and fallen like epochal undulations. The Aryans poured down upon the Dravidians, the Achæans and Dorians upon the Cretans and Ægeans, the Germans upon the Romans, the Lombards upon the Italians, the English upon the world. Forever the north produces rulers and warriors, the south produces artists and saints, and the meek inherit heaven.

Who were these marauding Aryans? They themselves used the term as meaning noblemen (Sanskrit *arya*, noble), but perhaps this patriotic derivation is one of those after-thoughts which cast scandalous gleams of humor into philology.\* Very probably they came from that Caspian region which their Persian cousins called *Airyanā-vaejō*—"The Aryan home."† About the same time that the Aryan Kassites overran Babylonia, the Vedic Aryans began to enter India.

Like the Germans invading Italy, these Aryans were rather immigrants than conquerors. But they brought with them strong physiques, a hearty appetite in both solids and liquids, a ready brutality, a skill and courage in war, which soon gave them the mastery of northern India. They fought with bows and arrows, led by armored warriors in chariots, who wielded battle-axes and hurled spears. They were too primitive to be hypocrites: they subjugated India without pretending to elevate it. They wanted land, and pasture for their cattle; their word for war said nothing about national honor, but simply meant "a desire for more cows."<sup>‡</sup> Slowly they made their way eastward along the Indus and the Ganges, until all Hindustan‡ was under their control.

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\* Monier-Williams derives *Aryan* from the Sanskrit root *ri-ar*, to plough;<sup>‡</sup> cf. the Latin *aratrum*, a plough, and *area*, an open space. On this theory the word *Aryan* originally meant not nobleman but peasant.

† We find such typically Vedic deities as Indra, Mitra and Varuna mentioned in a treaty concluded by the Aryan Hittites and Mitannians at the beginning of the fourteenth century B.C.;<sup>‡</sup> and so characteristic a Vedic ritual as the drinking of the sacred *soma* juice is repeated in the Persian ceremony of drinking the sap of the *haoma* plant. (Sanskrit *s* corresponds regularly to Zend or Persian *h*: *soma* becomes *haoma*, as *sindhu* becomes *Hindu*.) We conclude that the Mitannians, the Hittites, the Kassites, the Sogdians, the Bactrians, the Medes, the Persians, and the Aryan invaders of India were branches of an already heterogeneous "Indo-European" stock which spread out from the shores of the Caspian Sea.

‡ A word applied by the ancient Persians to India north of the Narbada River.



As they passed from armed warfare to settled tillage their tribes gradually coalesced into petty states. Each state was ruled by a king checked by a council of warriors; each tribe was led by a *raja* or chieftain limited in his power by a tribal council; each tribe was composed of comparatively independent village communities governed by assemblies of family heads. "Have you heard, Ananda," Buddha is represented as asking his St. John, "that the Vajjians foregather often, and frequent public meetings of their clans? . . . So long, Ananda, as the Vajjians foregather thus often, and frequent the public meetings of their clan, so long may they be expected not to decline, but to prosper."<sup>1</sup>

Like all peoples, the Aryans had rules of endogamy and exogamy—forbidding marriage outside the racial group or within near degrees of kinship. From these rules came the most characteristic of Hindu institutions. Outnumbered by a subject people whom they considered inferior to themselves, the Aryans foresaw that without restrictions on inter-marriage they would soon lose their racial identity; in a century or two they would be assimilated and absorbed. The first caste division, therefore, was not by status but by color;\* it divided long noses from broad noses, Aryans from Nagas and Dravidians; it was merely the marriage regulation of an endogamous group.<sup>2</sup> In its later profusion of hereditary, racial and occupational divisions the caste system hardly existed in Vedic times.<sup>3</sup> Among the Aryans themselves marriage (except of near kin) was free, and status was not defined by birth.

As Vedic India (2000-1000 B.C.) passed into the "Heroic" age (1000-500 B.C.)—i.e., as India changed from the conditions pictured in the *Vedas* into those described in the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*—occupations became more specialized and hereditary, and caste divisions were more rigidly defined. At the top were the Kshatriyas, or fighters, who held it a sin to die in bed.<sup>4</sup> Even the religious ceremonials were in the early days performed by chieftains or kings, in the fashion of Cæsar playing *Pontifex*; the Brahmans or priests were then mere assistants at the sacrifice.<sup>5</sup> In the *Ramayana* a Kshatriya protests passionately against mating a "proud and peerless bride" of warrior stock to "a prating priest and Brahman";<sup>6</sup> the Jain books take for granted the leadership of the Kshatriyas, and the Buddhist literature goes so far as to call the Brahmans "low-born."<sup>7</sup> Even in India things change.

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\* The early Hindu word for caste is *varna*, color. This was translated by the Portuguese invaders as *casta*, from the Latin *castus*, pure.

But as war gradually gave way to peace—and as religion, being then largely an aide to agriculture in the face of the incalculable elements, grew in social importance and ritual complexity, and required expert intermediaries between men and gods—the Brahmins increased in number, wealth and power. As educators of the young, and oral transmitters of the race's history, literature and laws, they were able to recreate the past and form the future in their own image, moulding each generation into greater reverence for the priests, and building for their caste a prestige which would, in later centuries, give them the supreme place in Hindu society. Already in Buddha's days they had begun to challenge the supremacy of the Kshatriyas; they pronounced these warriors inferior, even as the Kshatriyas pronounced the priests inferior;<sup>31</sup> and Buddha felt that there was much to be said for both points of view. Even in Buddha's time, however, the Kshatriyas had not conceded intellectual leadership to the Brahmins; and the Buddhist movement itself, founded by a Kshatriya noble, contested the religious hegemony of India with the Brahmins for a thousand years.

Below these ruling minorities were the Vaisyas, merchants and free-men hardly distinct as a caste before Buddha, the Shudras, or working-men, who comprised most of the native population; and finally the Out-castes or Pariahs—unconverted native tribes like the Chandalas, war captives, and men reduced to slavery as a punishment.<sup>32</sup> Out of this originally small group of casteless men grew the 40,000,000 "Untouchables" of India today.

#### IV. INDO-ARYAN SOCIETY

##### *Herders—Tillers of the soil—Craftsmen—Traders—Coinage and credit—Morals—Marriage—Woman*

How did these Aryan Indians live? At first by war and spoliation; then by herding, tillage and industry in a rural routine not unlike that of medieval Europe; for until the Industrial Revolution in which we live, the basic economic and political life of man had remained essentially the same since neolithic days. The Indo-Aryans raised cattle, used the cow without considering it sacred, and ate meat when they could afford it, having offered a morsel to priests or gods;<sup>33</sup> Buddha, after nearly starving himself in his ascetic youth, seems to have died from a hearty meal of pork.<sup>34</sup> They planted barley, but apparently knew nothing of rice in Vedic times. The fields were divided by each village community among

its constituent families, but were irrigated in common; the land could not be sold to an outsider, and could be bequeathed only to the family heirs in direct male line. The majority of the people were yeomen owning their own soil; the Aryans held it a disgrace to work for hire. There were, we are assured, no landlords and no paupers, no millionaires and no slums."

In the towns handicrafts flourished among independent artisans and apprentices, organized, half a thousand years before Christ, into powerful guilds of metal-workers, wood-workers, stone-workers, leather-workers, ivory-workers, basket-makers, house-painters, decorators, potters, dyers, fishermen, sailors, hunters, trappers, butchers, confectioners, barbers, shampooers, florists, cooks—the very list reveals the fulness and variety of Indo-Aryan life. The guilds settled intra-guild affairs, even arbitrating difficulties between members and their wives. Prices were determined, as among ourselves, not by supply and demand but by the gullibility of the purchaser; in the palace of the king, however, was an official Valuer who, like our secretive Bureau of Standards, tested goods to be bought, and dictated terms to the makers."

Trade and travel had advanced to the stage of horse and two-wheeled wagon, but were still mediævally difficult; caravans were held up by taxes at every petty frontier, and as like as not by highwaymen at any turn. Transport by river and sea was more developed: about 860 B.C. ships with modest sails and a thousand oars carried to Mesopotamia, Arabia and Egypt such typical Indian products as perfumes and spices, cotton and silk, shawls and muslins, pearls and rubies, ebony and precious stones, and ornate brocades of silver and gold."

Trade was stunted by clumsy methods of exchange—at first by barter, then by the use of cattle as currency; brides like Homer's "oxen-bearing maidens" were bought with cows." Later a heavy copper coinage was issued, guaranteed, however, only by private individuals. There were no banks; hoarded money was hidden in the house, or buried in the ground, or deposited with a friend. Out of this, in Buddha's age, grew a credit system: merchants in different towns facilitated trade by giving one another letters of credit; loans could be obtained from such Rothschilds at eighteen per cent," and there was much talk of promissory notes. The coinage was not sufficiently inconvenient to discourage gambling; already dice were essential to civilization. In many cases gambling halls were provided for his subjects by the king, in the fashion, if

not quite in the style, of Monaco; and a portion of the receipts went to the royal treasury.<sup>44</sup> It seems a scandalous arrangement to us, who are not quite accustomed to having our gambling institutions contribute so directly to the support of our public officials.

Commercial morality stood on a high level. The kings of Vedic India, as of Homeric Greece, were not above lifting cattle from their neighbors;<sup>45</sup> but the Greek historian of Alexander's campaigns describes the Hindus as "remarkable for integrity, so reasonable as seldom to have recourse to lawsuits, and so honest as to require neither locks to their doors nor writings to bind their agreements; they are in the highest degree truthful."<sup>46</sup> The *Rig-veda* speaks of incest, seduction, prostitution, abortion and adultery,<sup>47</sup> and there are some signs of homosexuality;<sup>48</sup> but the general picture that we derive from the *Vedas* and the epics is one of high standards in the relations of the sexes and the life of the family.

Marriage might be entered into by forcible abduction of the bride, by purchase of her, or by mutual consent. Marriage by consent, however, was considered slightly disreputable; women thought it more honorable to be bought and paid for, and a great compliment to be stolen.<sup>49</sup> Polygamy was permitted, and was encouraged among the great; it was an act of merit to support several wives, and to transmit ability.<sup>50</sup> The story of Draupadi,<sup>51</sup> who married five brothers at once, indicates the occasional occurrence, in Epic days, of that strange polyandry—the marriage of one woman to several men, usually brothers—which survived in Ceylon till 1859, and still lingers in the mountain villages of Tibet.<sup>52</sup> But polygamy was usually the privilege of the male, who ruled the Aryan household with patriarchal omnipotence. He held the right of ownership over his wives and his children, and might in certain cases sell them or cast them out.<sup>53</sup>

Nevertheless, woman enjoyed far greater freedom in the Vedic period than in later India. She had more to say in the choice of her mate than the forms of marriage might suggest. She appeared freely at feasts and dances, and joined with men in religious sacrifice. She could study, and might, like Gargi, engage in philosophic disputation.<sup>54</sup> If she was left a widow there were no restrictions upon her remarriage.<sup>55</sup> In the Heroic Age woman seems to have lost something of this liberty. She was discouraged from mental pursuits, on the ground that "for a woman to study the *Vedas* indicates confusion in the realm;"<sup>56</sup> the remarriage of widows became uncommon; *purdah*—the seclusion of women—began; and the

practice of suttee, almost unknown in Vedic times, increased.<sup>60</sup> The ideal woman was now typified in the heroine of the *Ramayana*—that faithful Sita who follows and obeys her husband humbly, through every test of fidelity and courage, until her death.

## V. THE RELIGION OF THE VEDAS

### *Pre-Vedic religion—Vedic gods—Moral gods—The Vedic story of Creation—Immortality—The horse sacrifice*

The oldest known religion of India, which the invading Aryans found among the Nagas, and which still survives in the ethnic nooks and crannies of the great peninsula, was apparently an animistic and totemic worship of multitudinous spirits dwelling in stones and animals, in trees and streams, in mountains and stars. Snakes and serpents were divinities—idols and ideals of virile reproductive power; and the sacred *Bodhi* tree of Buddha's time was a vestige of the mystic but wholesome reverence for the quiet majesty of trees.<sup>61</sup> Naga, the dragon-god, Hanuman the monkey-god, Nandi the divine bull, and the *Yakshas* or tree-gods passed down into the religion of historic India.<sup>62</sup> Since some of these spirits were good and some evil, only great skill in magic could keep the body from being possessed or tortured, in sickness or mania, by one or more of the innumerable demons that filled the air. Hence the medley of incantations in the *Atharva-veda*, or *Book of the Knowledge of Magic*; one must recite spells to obtain children, to avoid abortion, to prolong life, to ward off evil, to woo sleep, to destroy or harass enemies.<sup>63</sup>

The earliest gods of the *Vedas* were the forces and elements of nature herself—sky, sun, earth, fire, light, wind, water and sex.<sup>64</sup> Dyaus (the Greek Zeus, the Roman Jupiter) was at first the sky itself; and the Sanskrit word *deva*, which later was to mean divine, originally meant only bright. By that poetic license which makes so many deities, these natural objects were personified; the sky, for example, became a father, Varuna; the earth became a mother, Prithivi; and vegetation was the fruit of their union through the rain.<sup>65</sup> The rain was the god Parjanya, fire was Agni, the wind was Vayu, the pestilential wind was Rudra, the storm was Indra,

\* Cf. *Atharva-veda*, vi, 138, and vii, 35, 90, where incantations "bristling with hatred," and "language of unbridled wildness" are used by women seeking to oust their rivals, or to make them barren.<sup>60</sup> In the *Brihadaranyaka Upanishad* (6-12) formulas are given for raping a woman by incantation, and for "sinning without conceiving."<sup>61</sup>

the dawn was Ushas, the furrow in the field was Sita, the sun was Surya, Mitra, or Vishnu; and the sacred *soma* plant, whose juice was at once holy and intoxicating to gods and men, was itself a god, a Hindu Dionysus, inspiring man by its exhilarating essence to charity, insight and joy, and even bestowing upon him eternal life.<sup>61</sup> A nation, like an individual, begins with poetry, and ends with prose. And as things became persons, so qualities became objects, adjectives became nouns, epithets became deities. The life-giving sun became a new sun-god, Savitar the Life-Giver; the shining sun became Vivasvat, Shining God; the life-generating sun became the great god Prajapati, Lord of all living things.<sup>62</sup>

For a time the most important of the Vedic gods was Agni—fire; he was the sacred flame that lifted the sacrifice to heaven, he was the lightning that pranced through the sky, he was the fiery life and spirit of the world. But the most popular figure in the pantheon was Indra, wielder of thunder and storm. For Indra brought to the Indo-Aryans that precious rain which seemed to them even more vital than the sun; therefore they made him the greatest of the gods, invoked the aid of his thunderbolts in their battles, and pictured him enviously as a gigantic hero feasting on bulls by the hundred, and lapping up lakes of wine.<sup>63</sup> His favorite enemy was Krishna, who in the *Vedas* was as yet only the local god of the Krishna tribe. Vishnu, the sun who covered the earth with his strides, was also a subordinate god, unaware that the future belonged to him and to Krishna, his avatar. This is one value of the *Vedas* to us, that through them we see religion in the making, and can follow the birth, growth and death of gods and beliefs from animism to philosophic pantheism, and from the superstition of the *Atharva-veda* to the sublime monism of the *Upanishads*.

These gods are human in figure, in motive, almost in ignorance. One of them, besieged by prayers, ponders what he should give his devotee: "This is what I will do—no, not that; I will give him a cow—or shall it be a horse? I wonder if I have really had *soma* from him?"<sup>64</sup> Some of them, however, rose in later Vedic days to a majestic moral significance. Varuna, who began as the encompassing heaven, whose breath was the storm and whose garment was the sky, grew with the development of his worshipers into the most ethical and ideal deity of the *Vedas*—watching

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\* An almost monotheistic devotion was accorded to Prajapati, until he was swallowed up, in later theology, by the all-consuming figure of Brahma.

over the world through his great eye, the sun, punishing evil, rewarding good, and forgiving the sins of those who petitioned him. In this aspect Varuna was the custodian and executor of an eternal law called Rita; this was at first the law that established and maintained the stars in their courses; gradually it became also the law of right, the cosmic and moral rhythm which every man must follow if he would not go astray and be destroyed.<sup>88</sup>

As the number of the gods increased, the question arose as to which of them had created the world. This primal rôle was assigned now to Agni, now to Indra, now to Soma, now to Prajapati. One of the *Upanishads* attributed the world to an irrepressible Pro-creator:

Verily, he had no delight; one alone had no delight; he desired a second. He was, indeed, as large as a woman and a man closely embraced. He caused that self to fall (*v pat*) into two pieces; therefrom arose a husband (*pati*) and a wife (*patni*). Therefore . . . one's self is like a half fragment; . . . therefore this space is filled by a wife. He copulated with her. Therefore human beings were produced. And she bethought herself: "How, now, does he copulate with me after he has produced me just from himself? Come, let me hide myself." She became a cow. He became a bull. With her he did indeed copulate. Then cattle were born. She became a mare, he a stallion. She became a female ass, he a male ass; with her he copulated of a truth. Thence were born solid hoofed animals. She became a she-goat, he a he-goat; she a ewe, he a ram. With her he did verily copulate. Therefore were born goats and sheep. Thus indeed he created all, whatever pairs there are, even down to the ants. He knew: "I, indeed, am this creation, for I emitted it all from myself." Thence arose creation.<sup>89</sup>

In this unique passage we have the germ of pantheism and transmigration: the Creator is one with his creation, and all things, all forms of life, are one; every form was once another form, and is distinguished from it only in the prejudice of perception and the superficial separateness of time. This view, though formulated in the *Upanishads*, was not yet in Vedic days a part of the popular creed; instead of transmigration the Indo-Aryans, like the Aryans of Persia, accepted a simple belief in personal immortality. After death the soul entered into eternal punishment or happiness; it was thrust by Varuna into a dark abyss, half Hades and half hell, or was raised by Yama into a heaven where every earthly joy

was made endless and complete.<sup>70</sup> "Like corn decays the mortal," said the *Katha Upanishad*, "like corn is he born again."<sup>71</sup>

In the earlier Vedic religion there were, so far as the evidence goes, no temples and no images;<sup>72</sup> altars were put up anew for each sacrifice as in Zoroastrian Persia, and sacred fire lifted the offering to heaven. Vestiges of human sacrifice occur here,<sup>73</sup> as at the outset of almost every civilization; but they are few and uncertain. Again as in Persia, the horse was sometimes burnt as an offering to the gods.<sup>74</sup> The strangest ritual of all was the *Ashvamedha*, or Sacrifice of the Horse, in which the queen of the tribe seems to have copulated with the sacred horse after it had been killed.<sup>75</sup> The usual offering was a libation of *soma* juice, and the pouring of liquid butter into the fire.<sup>76</sup> The sacrifice was conceived for the most part in magical terms; if it were properly performed it would win its reward, regardless of the moral deserts of the worshiper.<sup>77</sup> The priests charged heavily for helping the pious in the ever more complicated ritual of sacrifice: if no fee was at hand, the priest refused to recite the necessary formulas; his payment had to come before that of the god. Rules were laid down by the clergy as to what the remuneration should be for each service—how many cows or horses, or how much gold; gold was particularly efficacious in moving the priest or the god.<sup>78</sup> The *Brahmanas*, written by the Brahmins, instructed the priest how to turn the prayer or sacrifice secretly to the hurt of those who had employed him, if they had given him an inadequate fee.<sup>79</sup> Other regulations were issued, prescribing the proper ceremony and usage for almost every occasion of life, and usually requiring priestly aid. Slowly the Brahmins became a privileged hereditary caste, holding the mental and spiritual life of India under a control that threatened to stifle all thought and change.<sup>81</sup>

## VI. THE VEDAS AS LITERATURE

### *Sanskrit and English—Writing—The four "Vedas"—The "Rig-veda"—A Hymn of Creation*

The language of the Indo-Aryans should be of special interest to us, for Sanskrit is one of the oldest in that "Indo-European" group of languages to which our own speech belongs. We feel for a moment a strange sense of cultural continuity across great stretches of time and space when

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\* *Ponebatque in gremium regina genitale victimae membrum.*<sup>80</sup>



we observe the similarity—in Sanskrit, Greek, Latin and English—of the numerals, the family terms, and those insinuating little words that, by some oversight of the moralists, have been called the copulative verb.\* It is quite unlikely that this ancient tongue, which Sir William Jones pronounced “more perfect than the Greek, more copious than the Latin, and more exquisitely refined than either,”<sup>88</sup> should have been the spoken language of the Aryan invaders. What that speech was we do not know; we can only presume that it was a near relative of the early Persian dialect in which the *Avesta* was composed. The Sanskrit of the *Vedas* and the epics has already the earmarks of a classic and literary tongue, used only by scholars and priests; the very word *Sanskrit* means “prepared, pure, perfect, sacred.” The language of the people in the Vedic age was not one but many; each tribe had its own Aryan dialect.<sup>81</sup> India has never had one language.

The *Vedas* contain no hint that writing was known to their authors. It was not until the eighth or ninth century B.C. that Hindu—probably Dravidian—merchants brought from western Asia a Semitic script, akin to the Phœnician; and from this “Brahma script,” as it came to be called, all the later alphabets of India were derived.<sup>82</sup> For centuries writing seems

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\* Cf. English *one, two, three, four, five* with Sanskrit *ek, dvve, tree, chatoor, panch*; Latin *unus, duo, tres, quattuor, quinque*; Greek *heis, duo, tria, tettara, pente*. (*Quattuor* becomes *four*, as Latin *quercus* becomes *fir*.) Or cf. English *am, art, is* with Sanskrit *asmi, asi, asti*; Latin *sum, es, est*; Greek *eimi, ei, esti*. For family terms cf. p. 357 above. Grimm's Law, which formulated the changes effected in the consonants of a word through the different vocal habits of separated peoples, has revealed to us more fully the surprising kinship of Sanskrit with our own tongue. The law may be roughly summarized by saying that in most cases (there are numerous exceptions):

1. Sanskrit *k* (as in *kratu*, power) corresponds to Greek *k* (*kartos*, strength), Latin *c* or *qu* (*cornu*, horn), German *h, g* or *k* (*hart*), and English *h, g* or *f* (*bard*);
2. Skt. *g* or *j* (as in *jan*, to beget), corresponds to Gk. *g* (*genos*, race), L. *g* (*genus*), Ger. *ch* or *k* (*kind*, child), E. *k* (*kin*);
3. Skt. *gh* or *h* (as in *hyas*, yesterday), corresponds to Gk. *ch* (*chthes*), L. *b, f, g*, or *v* (*heri*), Ger. *k* or *g* (*gestern*), E. *g* or *y* (*yesterday*);
4. Skt. *t* (as in *tar*, to cross) corresponds to Gk. *t* (*terma*, end), L. *t* (*ter-minus*), Ger. *d* (*durch*, through), E. *th* or *d* (*through*);
5. Skt. *d* (as in *das*, ten) corresponds to Gk. *d* (*deka*), L. *d* (*decem*), Ger. *z* (*zehn*), E. *t* (*ten*);
6. Skt. *dh* or *b* (as in *dha*, to place or put) corresponds to Gk. *th* (*ti-the-mi*, I place), L. *f, d* or *b* (*fa-cere*, do), Ger. *t* (*tun*, do), E. *d* (*do*, deed);
7. Skt. *p* (as in *patana*, feather) corresponds to Gk. *p* (*pteros*, wing), L. *p* (*penna*, feather), Ger. *f* or *v* (*feder*), E. *f* or *b* (*feather*);
8. Skt. *bh* (as in *bbri*, to bear) corresponds to Gk. *ph* (*pherein*), L. *f* or *b* (*fero*), Ger. *p, f* or *ph* (*fabren*), E. *b* or *p* (*bear, birth, brother, etc.*).<sup>83</sup>

to have been confined to commercial and administrative purposes, with little thought of using it for literature; "merchants, not priests, developed this basic art."<sup>80</sup> Even the Buddhist canon does not appear to have been written down before the third century B.C. The oldest extant inscriptions in India are those of Ashoka.<sup>81</sup> We who (until the air about us was filled with words and music) were for centuries made eye-minded by writing and print, find it hard to understand how contentedly India, long after she had learned to write, clung to the old ways of transmitting history and literature by recitation and memory. The *Vedas* and the epics were songs that grew with the generations of those that recited them; they were intended not for sight but for sound.\* From this indifference to writing comes our dearth of knowledge about early India.

What, then, were these *Vedas* from which nearly all our understanding of primitive India is derived? The word *Veda* means knowledge;† a *Veda* is literally a Book of Knowledge. *Vedas* is applied by the Hindus to all the sacred lore of their early period; like our Bible it indicates a literature rather than a book. Nothing could be more confused than the arrangement and division of this collection. Of the many *Vedas* that once existed, only four have survived:

- I. The *Rig-veda*, or Knowledge of the Hymns of Praise;
- II. The *Sama-veda*, or Knowledge of the Melodies;
- III. The *Yajur-veda*, or Knowledge of the Sacrificial Formulas; and
- IV. The *Atharva-veda*, or Knowledge of the Magic Formulas.

Each of these four *Vedas* is divided into four sections:

1. The *Mantras*, or Hymns;
2. The *Brahmanas*, or manuals of ritual, prayer and incantation for the priests;
3. The *Aranyaka*, or "forest-texts" for hermit saints; and
4. The *Upanishads*, or confidential conferences for philosophers.‡

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\* Perhaps poetry will recover its ancient hold upon our people when it is again recited rather than silently read.

† Greek (f) *oida*, Latin *video*, German *weise*, English *wit* and *wisdom*.

‡ This is but one of many possible divisions of the material. In addition to the "inspired" commentaries contained in the *Brahmanas* and *Upanishads*, Hindu scholars usually include in the *Vedas* several collections of shorter commentaries in aphoristic form, called *Sutras* (lit., threads, from Skt. *śiv*, to sew). These, while not directly inspired from heaven, have the high authority of an ancient tradition. Many of them are brief to the

## VII. THE PHILOSOPHY OF THE UPANISHADS

*The authors—Their theme—Intellect vs. intuition—Atman—Brahman—Their identity—A description of God—Salvation—Influence of the "Upanishads"—Emerson on Brahman*

"In the whole world," said Schopenhauer, "there is no study so beneficial and so elevating as that of the *Upanishads*. It has been the solace of my life—it will be the solace of my death."<sup>98</sup> Here, excepting the moral fragments of Ptah-hotep, are the oldest extant philosophy and psychology of our race; the surprisingly subtle and patient effort of man to understand the mind and the world, and their relation. The *Upanishads* are as old as Homer, and as modern as Kant.

The word is composed of *upa*, near, and *shad*, to sit. From "sitting near" the teacher the term came to mean the secret or esoteric doctrine confided by the master to his best and favorite pupils.<sup>99</sup> There are one hundred and eight of these discourses, composed by various saints and sages between 800 and 500 B.C.<sup>100</sup> They represent not a consistent system of philosophy, but the opinions, *aperçus* and lessons of many men, in whom philosophy and religion were still fused in the attempt to understand—and reverently unite with—the simple and essential reality underlying the superficial multiplicity of things. They are full of absurdities and contradictions, and occasionally they anticipate all the wind of Hegelian verbiage;<sup>101</sup> sometimes they present formulas as weird as that of Tom Sawyer for curing warts;<sup>102</sup> sometimes they impress us as the profoundest thinking in the history of philosophy.

We know the names of many of the authors,<sup>103</sup> but we know nothing of their lives except what they occasionally reveal in their teachings. The most vivid figures among them are Yajnavalkya, the man, and Gargi, the woman who has the honor of being among the earliest of philosophers. Of the two, Yajnavalkya has the sharper tongue. His fellow teachers looked upon him as a dangerous innovator; his posterity made his doctrine the cornerstone of unchallengeable orthodoxy.<sup>104</sup> He tells us how he tried to leave his two wives in order to become a hermit sage; and in the plea of his wife Maitreyi that he should take her with him, we catch some feeling of the intensity with which India has for thousands of years pursued religion and philosophy.

And then Yajnavalkya was about to commence another mode of life.

"Maitreyi!" said Yajnavalkya, "lo, I am about to wander forth from this state. Let me make a final settlement for you and that Katyayani."

Then spake Maitreyi: "If, now, Sir, this whole earth filled with wealth were mine, would I now thereby be immortal?"

"No, no!" said Yajnavalkya. "Of immortality there is no hope through wealth."

Then spake Maitreyi: "What should I do with that through which I may not be immortal? What you know, Sir—that, indeed, explain to me."<sup>108</sup>

The theme of the *Upanishads* is all the mystery of this unintelligible world. "Whence are we born, where do we live, and whither do we go? O ye who know *Brahman*, tell us at whose command we abide here. . . . Should time, or nature, or necessity, or chance, or the elements be considered the cause, or he who is called *Purusha*"—the Supreme Spirit?<sup>109</sup> India has had more than her share of men who wanted "not millions, but answers to their questions." In the *Maitri Upanishad* we read of a king abandoning his kingdom and going into the forest to practice austerities, clear his mind for understanding, and solve the riddle of the universe. After a thousand days of the king's penances a sage, "knower of the soul," came to him. "You are one who knows its true nature," says the king; "do you tell us." "Choose other desires," warns the sage. But the king insists; and in a passage that must have seemed Schopenhauerian to Schopenhauer, he voices that revulsion against life, that fear of being reborn, which runs darkly through all Hindu thought:

"Sir, in this ill-smelling, unsubstantial body, which is a conglomerate of bone, skin, muscle, marrow, flesh, semen, blood, mucus, tears, rheum, feces, urine, wind, bile and phlegm, what is the good of enjoyment of desire? In this body, which is afflicted with desire, anger, covetousness, delusion, fear, despondency, envy, separation from the desirable, union with the undesirable, hunger, thirst, senility, death, disease, sorrow and the like, what is the good of enjoyment of desires? And we see that this whole world is decaying like these gnats, these mosquitoes, this grass, and these trees that arise and perish. . . . Among other things there is the drying up of great oceans, the falling-away of mountain-peaks, the deviation of the fixed pole-

star, . . . the submergence of the earth. . . . In this sort of cycle of existence what is the good of enjoyment of desires, when, after a man has fed upon them, there is seen repeatedly his return here to the earth?"<sup>104</sup>

The first lesson that the sages of the *Upanishads* teach their selected pupils is the inadequacy of the intellect. How can this feeble brain, that aches at a little calculus, ever hope to understand the complex immensity of which it is so transitory a fragment? Not that the intellect is useless; it has its modest place, and serves us well when it deals with relations and things; but how it falters before the eternal, the infinite, or the elementally real! In the presence of that silent reality which supports all appearances, and wells up in all consciousness, we need some other organ of perception and understanding than these senses and this reason. "Not by learning is the *Atman* (or Soul of the World) attained, not by genius and much knowledge of books. . . . Let a Brahman renounce learning and become as a child. . . . Let him not seek after many words, for that is mere weariness of tongue."<sup>105</sup> The highest understanding, as Spinoza was to say, is direct perception, immediate insight; it is, as Bergson would say, intuition, the inward seeing of the mind that has deliberately closed, as far as it can, the portals of external sense. "The self-evident *Brahman* pierced the openings of the senses so that they turned outwards; therefore man looks outward, not inward into himself; some wise man, however, with his eyes closed and wishing for immortality, saw the self behind."<sup>106</sup>

If, on looking inward, a man finds nothing at all, that may only prove the accuracy of his introspection; for no man need expect to find the eternal in himself if he is lost in the ephemeral and particular. Before that inner reality can be felt one has to wash away from himself all evil doing and thinking, all turbulence of body and soul.<sup>107</sup> For a fortnight one must fast, drinking only water;<sup>108</sup> then the mind, so to speak, is starved into tranquillity and silence, the senses are cleansed and stilled, the spirit is left at peace to feel itself and that great ocean of soul of which it is a part; at last the individual ceases to be, and Unity and Reality appear. For it is not the individual self which the seer sees in this pure inward seeing; that individual self is but a series of brain or mental states, it is merely the body seen from within. What the seeker seeks is *Atman*,\* the

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\* The derivation of this word is uncertain. Apparently (as in *Rig. x, 16*), it originally meant breath, like the Latin *spiritus*; then vital essence, then soul.<sup>109</sup>

Self of all selves, the Soul of all souls, the immaterial, formless Absolute in which we bathe ourselves when we forget ourselves.

This, then, is the first step in the Secret Doctrine: that the essence of our own self is not the body, or the mind, or the individual ego, but the silent and formless depth of being within us, *Atman*. The second step is *Brahman*,\* the one pervading, neuter,† impersonal, all-embracing, underlying, intangible essence of the world, the "Real of the Real," "the unborn Soul, undecaying, undying,"<sup>110</sup> the Soul of all Things as *Atman* is the Soul of all Souls; the one force that stands behind, beneath and above all forces and all gods.

Then Vidagda Sakayla questioned him. "How many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

He answered, . . . "As many as are mentioned in the Hymn to All the Gods, namely, three hundred and three, and three thousand and three."

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"Thirty-three."

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"Six."

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"Two."

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"One and a half."

"Yes, but just how many gods are there, Yajnavalkya?"

"One."<sup>111</sup>

The third step is the most important of all: *Atman* and *Brahman* are one. The (non-individual) soul or force within us is identical with the impersonal Soul of the World. The *Upanishads* burn this doctrine into the pupil's mind with untiring, tiring repetition. Behind all forms and

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\* *Brahman* as here used, meaning the impersonal Soul of the World, is to be distinguished from the more personal *Brahma*, member of the Hindu triad of gods (*Brahma*, *Vishnu*, *Shiva*); and from *Brahman* as denoting a member of the priestly caste. The distinction, however, is not always carried out, and *Brahma* is sometimes used in the sense of *Brahman*. *Brahman* as God will be distinguished in these pages from *Brahman* as priest by being italicized.

† The Hindu thinkers are the least anthropomorphic of all religious philosophers. Even in the later hymns of the *Rig-veda* the Supreme Being is indifferently referred to as *he* or *it*, to show that it is above sex.<sup>112</sup>

veils the subjective and the objective are one; we, in our de-individualized reality, and God as the essence of all things, are one. A teacher expresses it in a famous parable:

"Bring hither a fig from there."

"Here it is, Sir."

"Divide it."

"It is divided, Sir."

"What do you see there?"

"These rather fine seeds, Sir."

"Of these please divide one."

"It is divided, Sir."

"What do you see there?"

"Nothing at all, Sir."

"Verily, my dear one, that finest essence which you do not perceive—verily from that finest essence this great tree thus arises. Believe me, my dear one, that which is the finest essence—this whole world has that as its soul. That is Reality. That is *Atman*. *Tat tvam asi*—that art thou, Shwetaketu."

"Do you, Sir, cause me to understand even more."

"So be it, my dear one."<sup>122</sup>

This almost Hegelian dialectic of *Atman*, *Brahman* and their synthesis is the essence of the *Upanishads*. Many other lessons are taught here, but they are subordinate. We find already, in these discourses, the belief in transmigration,\* and the longing for release (*Moksha*) from this heavy chain of reincarnations. Janaka, King of the Videhas, begs Yajnavalkya to tell him how rebirth can be avoided. Yajnavalkya answers by expounding *Yoga*: through the ascetic elimination of all personal desires one may cease to be an individual fragment, unite himself in supreme bliss with the Soul of the World, and so escape rebirth. Whereupon the king, metaphysically overcome, says: "I will give you, noble Sir, the Videhas, and myself also to be your slave."<sup>123</sup> It is an abstruse heaven, however, that Yajnavalkya promises the devotee, for in it there will be no individual consciousness,<sup>124</sup> there will only be absorption into Being, the reunion of

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\*It occurs first in the *Satapatha Upanishad*, where repeated births and deaths are viewed as a punishment inflicted by the gods for evil living. Most primitive tribes believe that the soul can pass from a man to an animal and *vice versa*; probably this idea became, in the pre-Aryan inhabitants of India, the basis of the transmigration creed.<sup>124</sup>

the temporarily separated part with the Whole. "As flowing rivers disappear in the sea, losing their name and form, thus a wise man, freed from name and form, goes to the divine person who is beyond all."<sup>200</sup>

Such a theory of life and death will not please Western man, whose religion is as permeated with individualism as are his political and economic institutions. But it has satisfied the philosophical Hindu mind with astonishing continuity. We shall find this philosophy of the *Upanishads*—this monistic theology, this mystic and impersonal immortality—dominating Hindu thought from Buddha to Gandhi, from Yajnavalkya to Tagore. To our own day the *Upanishads* have remained to India what the *New Testament* has been to Christendom—a noble creed occasionally practised and generally revered. Even in Europe and America this wistful theosophy has won millions upon millions of followers, from lonely women and tired men to Schopenhauer and Emerson. Who would have thought that the great American philosopher of individualism would give perfect expression to the Hindu conviction that individuality is a delusion?

### *Brahma*

If the red slayer thinks he slays,  
Or if the slain thinks he is slain,  
They know not well the subtle ways  
I keep, and pass, and turn again.

Far or forgot to me is near;  
Shadow and sunlight are the same;  
The vanished gods to me appear;  
And one to me are shame and fame.

They reckon ill who leave me out;  
When me they fly I am the wings;  
I am the doubter and the doubt,  
And I the hymn the Brahman sings.



## CHAPTER XV

# Buddha

### I. THE HERETICS

*Sceptics—Nihilists—Sophists—Atheists—Materialists—Religions  
without a god*

THAT there were doubters, even in the days of the *Upanishads*, appears from the *Upanishads* themselves. Sometimes the sages ridiculed the priests, as when the *Chandogya Upanishad* likens the orthodox clergy of the time to a procession of dogs each holding the tail of its predecessor, and saying, piously, "Om, let us eat; Om, let us drink." The *Swasanved Upanishad* announces that there is no god, no heaven, no hell, no reincarnation, no world; that the *Vedas* and *Upanishads* are the work of conceited fools; that ideas are illusions, and all words untrue; that people deluded by flowery speech cling to gods and temples and "holy men," though in reality there is no difference between Vishnu and a dog." And the story is told of Virocana, who lived as a pupil for thirty-two years with the great god Prajapati Himself, received much instruction about "the Self which is free from evil, ageless, deathless, sorrowless, hungerless, thirstless, whose desire is the Real," and then suddenly returned to earth and preached this highly scandalizing doctrine: "One's self is to be made happy here on earth. One's self is to be waited upon. He who makes himself happy here on earth, who waits upon himself, obtains both worlds, this world and the next." Perhaps the good Brahmans who have preserved the history of their country have deceived us a little about the unanimity of Hindu mysticism and piety.

Indeed, as scholarship unearths some of the less respectable figures in Indian philosophy before Buddha, a picture takes form in which, along with saints meditating on *Brahman*, we find a variety of persons who despised all priests, doubted all gods, and bore without trepidation the name of *Nastiks*, No-sayers, Nihilists. Sangaya, the agnostic, would neither admit nor deny life after death; he questioned the possibility of knowl-

edge, and limited philosophy to the pursuit of peace. Purana Kashyapa refused to accept moral distinctions, and taught that the soul is a passive slave to chance. Maskarin Gosala held that fate determines everything, regardless of the merits of men. Ajita Kasakambalin reduced man to earth, water, fire and wind, and said: "Fools and wise alike, on the dissolution of the body, are cut off, annihilated, and after death they are not." The author of the *Ramayana* draws a typical sceptic in Jabali, who ridicules Rama for rejecting a kingdom in order to keep a vow.

Jabali, a learned Brahman and a Sophist skilled in word,  
Questioned Faith and Law and Duty, spake to young Ayodhya's  
lord:

"Wherefore, Rama, idle maxims cloud thy heart and warp thy mind,  
Maxims which mislead the simple and the thoughtless human-  
kind? . . .

Ah, I weep for erring mortals who, on erring duty bent,  
Sacrifice this dear enjoyment till their barren life is spent,  
Who to Gods and to the Fathers vainly still their offerings make.  
Waste of food! for God nor Father doth our pious homage take!  
And the food by one partaken, can it nourish other men?  
Food bestowed upon a Brahman, can it serve our Fathers then?  
Crafty priests have forged these maxims, and with selfish objects say,  
"Make thy gifts and do thy penance, leave thy worldly wealth, and  
pray!"

There is no hereafter, Rama, vain the hope and creed of men;  
Seek the pleasures of the present, spurn illusions poor and vain."

When Buddha grew to manhood he found the halls, the streets, the very woods of northern India ringing with philosophic disputation, mostly of an atheistic and materialistic trend. The later *Upanishads* and the oldest Buddhist books are full of references to these heretics.<sup>9</sup> A large class of traveling Sophists—the *Paribbajaka*, or Wanderers—spent the better part of every year in passing from locality to locality, seeking pupils, or antagonists, in philosophy. Some of them taught logic as the art of proving anything, and earned for themselves the titles of "Hair-splitters" and "Eel-wrigglers"; others demonstrated the non-existence of God, and the inexpediency of virtue. Large audiences gathered to hear such lectures and debates; great halls were built to accommodate them; and sometimes princes

offered rewards for those who should emerge victorious from these intellectual jousts.<sup>7</sup> It was an age of amazingly free thought, and of a thousand experiments in philosophy.

Not much has come down to us from these sceptics, and their memory has been preserved almost exclusively through the diatribes of their enemies.<sup>8</sup> The oldest name among them is Brihaspati, but his nihilistic *Sutras* have perished, and all that remains of him is a poem denouncing the priests in language free from all metaphysical obscurity:

No heaven exists, no final liberation,  
 No soul, no other world, no rites of caste. . . .  
 The triple *Veda*, triple self-command,  
 And all the dust and ashes of repentance—  
 These yield a means of livelihood for men  
 Devoid of intellect and manliness. . . .  
 How can this body when reduced to dust  
 Revisit earth? And if a ghost can pass  
 To other worlds, why does not strong affection  
 For those he leaves behind attract him back?  
 The costly rites enjoined for those who die  
 Are but a means of livelihood devised  
 By sacerdotal cunning—nothing more. . . .  
 While life endures let life be spent in ease  
 And merriment; let a man borrow money  
 From all his friends, and feast on melted butter.<sup>9</sup>

Out of the aphorisms of Brihaspati came a whole school of Hindu materialists, named, after one of them, *Charvakas*. They laughed at the notion that the *Vedas* were divinely revealed truth; truth, they argued, can never be known, except through the senses. Even reason is not to be trusted, for every inference depends for its validity not only upon accurate observation and correct reasoning, but also upon the assumption that the future will behave like the past; and of this, as Hume was to say, there can be no certainty.<sup>10</sup> What is not perceived by the senses, said the *Charvakas*, does not exist; therefore the soul is a delusion, and *Atman* is humbug. We do not observe, in experience or history, any interposition of supernatural forces in the world. All phenomena are natural; only simpletons trace them to demons or gods.<sup>11</sup> Matter is the one reality; the body is a combination of atoms;<sup>12</sup> the mind is merely matter thinking; the

body, not the soul, feels, sees, hears, thinks." "Who has seen the soul existing in a state separate from the body?" There is no immortality, no rebirth. Religion is an aberration, a disease, or a chicanery; the hypothesis of a god is useless for explaining or understanding the world. Men think religion necessary only because, being accustomed to it, they feel a sense of loss, and an uncomfortable void, when the growth of knowledge destroys this faith.<sup>14</sup> Morality, too, is natural; it is a social convention and convenience, not a divine command. Nature is indifferent to good and bad, virtue and vice, and lets the sun shine indiscriminately upon knaves and saints; if nature has any ethical quality at all it is that of transcendent immorality. There is no need to control instinct and passion, for these are the instructions of nature to men. Virtue is a mistake; the purpose of life is living, and the only wisdom is happiness.<sup>15</sup>

This revolutionary philosophy of the *Charvakas* put an end to the age of the *Vedas* and the *Upanishads*. It weakened the hold of the Brahmins on the mind of India, and left in Hindu society a vacuum which almost compelled the growth of a new religion. But the materialists had done their work so thoroughly that both of the new religions which arose to replace the old Vedic faith were, anomalous though it may sound, atheistic religions, devotions without a god. Both belonged to the *Nastika* or Nihilistic movement; and both were originated not by the Brahman priests but by members of the Kshatriya warrior caste, in a reaction against sacerdotal ceremonialism and theology. With the coming of Jainism and Buddhism a new epoch began in the history of India.

## II. MAHAVIRA AND THE JAINS

### *The Great Hero—The Jain creed—Atheistic polytheism—Asceticism—Salvation by suicide—Later history of the Jains*

About the middle of the sixth century B.C. a boy was born to a wealthy nobleman of the Lichchavi tribe in a suburb of the city of Vaishali, in what is now the province of Bihar.\* His parents, though wealthy, belonged to a sect that looked upon rebirth as a curse, and upon suicide as a blessed privilege. When their son had reached his thirty-first year they ended their lives by voluntary starvation. The young man, moved to the depths

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\* Tradition gives Mahavira's dates as 599-527 B.C.; but Jacobi believes that 549-477 B.C. would be nearer the fact.<sup>16</sup>

of his soul, renounced the world and its ways, divested himself of all clothing, and wandered through western Bengal as an ascetic, seeking self-purification and understanding. After thirteen years of such self-denial, he was hailed by a group of disciples as a *Jina* ("conqueror"), i.e., one of the great teachers whom fate, they believed, had ordained to appear at regular intervals to enlighten the people of India. They rechristened their leader *Mahavira*, or the Great Hero, and took to themselves, from their most characteristic belief, the name of *Jains*. Mahavira organized a celibate clergy and an order of nuns, and when he died, aged seventy-two, left behind him fourteen thousand devotees.

Gradually this sect developed one of the strangest bodies of doctrine in all the history of religion. They began with a realistic logic, in which knowledge was described as confined to the relative and temporal. Nothing is true, they taught, except from one point of view; from other points of view it would probably be false. They were fond of quoting the story of the six blind men who laid hands on different parts of an elephant; he who held the ear thought that the elephant was a great winnowing fan; he who held the leg said the animal was a big, round pillar.<sup>27</sup> All judgments, therefore, are limited and conditional; absolute truth comes only to the periodic Redeemers or *Jinas*. Nor can the *Vedas* help; they are not inspired by God, if only for the reason that there is no God. It is not necessary, said the Jains, to assume a Creator or First Cause; any child can refute that assumption by showing that an uncreated Creator, or a causeless Cause, is just as hard to understand as an uncaused or uncreated world. It is more logical to believe that the universe has existed from all eternity, and that its infinite changes and revolutions are due to the inherent powers of nature rather than to the intervention of a deity.<sup>28</sup>

But the climate of India does not lend itself to a persistently naturalistic creed. The Jains, having emptied the sky of God, soon peopled it again with the deified saints of Jain history and legend. These they worshiped with devotion and ceremony, but even them they considered subject to transmigration and decay, and not in any sense as the creators or rulers of the world.<sup>29</sup> Nor were the Jains materialists; they accepted a dualistic distinction of mind and matter everywhere; in all things, even in stones and metals, there were souls. Any soul that achieved a blameless life became a *Paramatman*, or supreme soul, and was spared reincarnation for a while; when its reward had equaled its merit, however, it was born into the flesh again. Only the highest and most perfect spirits could achieve

complete "release"; these were the *Arhats*, or supreme lords, who lived like Epicurus' deities in some distant and shadowy realm, impotent to affect the affairs of men, but happily removed from all chances of rebirth.<sup>30</sup>

The road to release, said the Jains, was by ascetic penances and complete *ahimsa*—abstinence from injury to any living thing. Every Jain ascetic must take five vows: not to kill anything, not to lie, not to take what is not given, to preserve chastity, and to renounce pleasure in all external things. Sense pleasure, they thought, is always a sin; the ideal is indifference to pleasure and pain, and independence of all external objects. Agriculture is forbidden to the Jain, because it tears up the soil and crushes insects or worms. The good Jain rejects honey as the life of the bee, strains water lest he destroy creatures lurking in it when he drinks, veils his mouth for fear of inhaling and killing the organisms of the air, screens his lamp to protect insects from the flame, and sweeps the ground before him as he walks lest his naked foot should trample out some life. The Jain must never slaughter or sacrifice an animal; and if he is thorough-going he establishes hospitals or asylums, as at Ahmedabad, for old or injured beasts. The only life that he may kill is his own. His doctrine highly approves of suicide, especially by slow starvation, for this is the greatest victory of the spirit over the blind will to live. Many Jains have died in this way; and the leaders of the sect are said to leave the world, even today, by self-starvation.<sup>31</sup>

A religion based upon so profound a doubt and denial of life might have found some popular support in a country where life has always been hard; but even in India its extreme asceticism limited its appeal. From the beginning the Jains were a select minority; and though Yuan Chwang found them numerous and powerful in the seventh century,<sup>32</sup> it was a passing zenith in a quiet career. About 79 A.D. a great schism divided them on the question of nudity; from that time on the Jains have belonged either to the *Shwetambara*—white-robed—sect, or to the *Digambaras*—sky-clad or nude. Today both sects wear the usual clothing of their place and time; only their saints go about the streets naked. These sects have further sects to divide them: the Digambaras have four, the Shwetambaras eighty-four;<sup>33</sup> together they number only 1,300,000 adherents out of a population of 320,000,000 souls.<sup>34</sup> Gandhi has been strongly influenced by the Jain sect, has accepted *ahimsa* as the basis of his policy and his life, contents himself with a loin-cloth, and may starve himself to death. The Jains may yet name him as one of their *Jinas*,

another incarnation of the great spirit that periodically is made flesh to redeem the world.

### III. THE LEGEND OF BUDDHA

*The background of Buddhism—The miraculous birth—Youth—  
The sorrows of life — Flight — Ascetic years — Enlighten-  
ment—A vision of "Nirvana"*

It is difficult to see, across 2,500 years, what were the economic, political and moral conditions that called forth religions so ascetic and pessimistic as Jainism and Buddhism. Doubtless much material progress had been made since the establishment of the Aryan rule in India: great cities like Pataliputra and Vaishali had been built; industry and trade had created wealth, wealth had generated leisure, leisure had developed knowledge and culture. Probably it was the riches of India that produced the epicureanism and materialism of the seventh and sixth centuries before Christ. Religion does not prosper under prosperity; the senses liberate themselves from pious restraints, and formulate philosophies that will justify their liberation. As in the China of Confucius and the Greece of Protagoras—not to speak of our own day—so in Buddha's India the intellectual decay of the old religion had begotten ethical scepticism and moral anarchy. Jainism and Buddhism, though impregnated with the melancholy atheism of a disillusioned age, were religious reactions against the hedonistic creeds of an "emancipated" and worldly leisure class.\*

Hindu tradition describes Buddha's father, Shuddhodhana, as a man of the world, member of the Gautama clan of the proud Shakya tribe, and prince or king of Kapilavastu, at the foot of the Himalayan range.<sup>66</sup> In truth, however, we know nothing certain about Buddha; and if we give here the stories that have gathered about his name it is not because these are history, but because they are an essential part of Hindu literature and Asiatic religion. Scholarship assigns his birth to approximately 563 B.C., and can say no more; legend takes up the tale, and reveals to us in

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\* It has often been remarked that this period was distinguished by a shower of stars in the history of genius: Mahavira and Buddha in India, Lao-tze and Confucius in China, Jeremiah and the Second Isaiah in Judea, the pre-Socratic philosophers in Greece, and perhaps Zarathustra in Persia. Such a simultaneity of genius suggests more intercommunication and mutual influence among these ancient cultures than it is possible to trace definitely today.

what strange ways men may be conceived. At that time, says one of the *Jataka* books,\*

in the city of Kapilavastu the festival of the full moon . . . had been proclaimed. Queen Maya from the seventh day before the full moon celebrated the festival without intoxicants, and with abundance of garlands and perfumes. Rising early on the seventh day she bathed in scented water, and bestowed a great gift of four hundred thousand pieces as alms. Fully adorned, she ate of choice food, took upon herself the *Uposatha* vows,† entered her adorned state bed-chamber, lay down on the bed, and falling asleep, dreamt this dream.

Four great kings, it seemed, raised her together with the bed, and taking her to the Himalayas, set her on the Manosila table-land. . . . Then their queens came and took her to the Anotatta Lake, bathed her to remove human stain, robed her in heavenly clothing, anointed her with perfumes, and bedecked her with divine flowers. Not far away is a silver mountain, and thereon a golden mansion. There they prepared a divine bed with head to the east, and laid her upon it. Now the *Bodhisattwa*‡ became a white elephant. Not far from there is a golden mountain; and going there he descended from it, alighted on the silver mountain, approaching it from the direction of the north. In his trunk, which was like a silver rope, he held a white lotus. Then, trumpeting, he entered the golden mansion, made a rightwise circle three times around his mother's bed, smote her right side, and appeared to enter her womb. Thus he received . . . a new existence.

The next day the Queen awoke and told her dream to the King. The King summoned sixty-four eminent Brahmins, showed them honor, and satisfied them with excellent food and other presents. Then, when they were satisfied with these pleasures, he caused the dream to be told, and asked what would happen. The Brahmins said: Be not anxious, O King; the Queen has conceived, a male not a female, and thou shalt have a son; and if he dwells in a house he

\* "Birth-stories" of Buddha, written about the fifth century A.D. Another legend, the *Lalitavistara*, has been paraphrased by Sir Edwin Arnold in *The Light of Asia*.

† I.e., vows appropriate to the *Uposatha*, or four holy days of the month: the full moon, the new moon, and the eighth day after either of them.<sup>20</sup>

‡ I.e., one destined to be a Buddha; here meaning *the* Buddha himself. Buddha, meaning "Enlightened," is among the many titles given to the Master, whose personal name was Siddhartha, and whose clan name was Gautama. He was also called *Shakya-muni*, or "Sage of the Shakyas," and *Tathagata*, "One Who Has Won the Truth." Buddha never applied any of these titles to himself, so far as we know.<sup>21</sup>



will become a king, a universal monarch, if he leaves his house and goes forth from the world, he will become a Buddha, a remover, in the world, of the veil (of ignorance). . . .

Queen Maya, bearing the *Bodhisattwa* for ten months like oil in a bowl, when her time was come, desired to go to her relatives' house, and addressed King Shuddhodhana: "I wish, O King, to go to Devadaha, the city of my family." The King approved, and caused the road from Kapilavastu to Devadaha to be made smooth and adorned with vessels filled with plantains, flags and banners; and seating her in a golden palanquin borne by a thousand courtiers, sent her with a great retinue. Between the two cities, and belonging to the inhabitants of both, is a pleasure grove of Sal trees named the Lumbini Grove. At that time, from the roots to the tips of the branches, it was one mass of flowers. . . . When the Queen saw it, a desire to sport in the grove arose. . . . She went to the foot of a great Sal tree, and desired to seize a branch. The branch, like the tip of a supple reed, bent down and came within reach of her hand. Stretching out her hand she received the branch. Thereupon she was shaken with the throes of birth. So the multitude set up a curtain for her, and retired. Holding the branch, and even while standing, she was delivered. . . . And as other beings when born come forth stained with impure matter, not so the *Bodhisattwa*. But the *Bodhisattwa*, like a preacher of the Doctrine descending from the seat of Doctrine, like a man descending stairs, stretched out his two hands and feet, and standing unsoiled and unstained by any impurity, shining like a jewel laid on Benares cloth, descended from his mother.<sup>28</sup>

It must further be understood that at Buddha's birth a great light appeared in the sky, the deaf heard, the dumb spoke, the lame were made straight, gods bent down from heaven to assist him, and kings came from afar to welcome him. Legend paints a colorful picture of the splendor and luxury that surrounded him in his youth. He dwelt as a happy prince in three palaces "like a god," protected by his loving father from all contact with the pain and grief of human life. Forty thousand dancing girls entertained him, and when he came of age five hundred ladies were sent to him that he might choose one as his wife. As a member of the Kshatriya caste, he received careful training in the military arts; but also he sat at the feet of sages, and made himself master of all the

philosophical theories current in his time." He married, became a happy father, and lived in wealth, peace and good repute.

One day, says pious tradition, he went forth from his palace into the streets among the people, and saw an old man; and on another day he went forth and saw a sick man; and on a third day he went forth and saw a dead man. He himself, in the holy books of his disciples, tells the tale movingly:

Then, O monks, did I, endowed with such majesty and such excessive delicacy, think thus: "An ignorant, ordinary person, who is himself subject to old age, not beyond the sphere of old age, on seeing an old man, is troubled, ashamed and disgusted, extending the thought to himself. I, too, am subject to old age, not beyond the sphere of old age; and should I, who am subject to old age, . . . on seeing an old man, be troubled, ashamed and disgusted?" This seemed to me not fitting. As I thus reflected, all the elation in youth suddenly disappeared. . . . Thus, O monks, before my enlightenment, being myself subject to birth, I sought out the nature of birth; being subject to old age I sought out the nature of old age, of sickness, of sorrow, of impurity. Then I thought: "What if I, being myself subject to birth, were to seek out the nature of birth, . . . and having seen the wretchedness of the nature of birth, were to seek out the unborn, the supreme peace of Nirvana?"<sup>200</sup>

Death is the origin of all religions, and perhaps if there had been no death there would have been no gods. To Buddha these sights were the beginning of "enlightenment." Like one overcome with "conversion," he suddenly resolved to leave his father,\* his wife and his newborn son, and become an ascetic in the desert. During the night he stole into his wife's room, and looked for the last time upon his son, Rahula. Just then, say the Buddhist Scriptures, in a passage sacred to all followers of Gautama,

a lamp of scented oil was burning. On the bed strewn with heaps of jessamine and other flowers, the mother of Rahula was sleeping, with her hand on her son's head. The *Bodhisattwa*, standing with his foot on the threshold, looked, and thought, "If I move aside the Queen's

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\* His mother had died in giving him birth.

hand and take my son, the Queen will awake, and this will be an obstacle to my going. When I have become a Buddha I will come back and see him." And he descended from the palace.<sup>21</sup>

In the dark of the morning he rode out of the city on his horse Kanthaka, with his charioteer Chauna clinging desperately to the tail. Then Mara, Prince of Evil, appeared to him and tempted him, offering him great empires. But Buddha refused, and riding on, crossed a broad river with one mighty leap. A desire to look again at his native city arose in him, but he did not turn. Then the great earth turned round, so that he might not have to look back.<sup>22</sup>

He stopped at a place called Uruvela. "There," he says, "I thought to myself, truly this is a pleasant spot, and a beautiful forest. Clear flows the river, and pleasant are the bathing-places; all around are meadows and villages." Here he devoted himself to the severest forms of asceticism; for six years he tried the ways of the Yogis who had already appeared on the Indian scene. He lived on seeds and grass, and for one period he fed on dung. Gradually he reduced his food to a grain of rice each day. He wore hair cloth, plucked out his hair and beard for torture's sake, stood for long hours, or lay upon thorns. He let the dust and dirt accumulate upon his body until he looked like an old tree. He frequented a place where human corpses were exposed to be eaten by birds and beasts, and slept among the rotting carcasses. And again, he tells us,

I thought, what if now I set my teeth, press my tongue to my palate, and restrain, crush and burn out my mind with my mind. (I did so.) And sweat flowed from my arm-pits. . . . Then I thought, what if I now practice trance without breathing. So I restrained breathing in and out from mouth and nose. And as I did so there was a violent sound of winds issuing from my ears. . . . Just as if a strong man were to crush one's head with the point of a sword, even so did violent winds disturb my head. . . . Then I thought, what if I were to take food only in small amounts, as much as my hollowed palm would hold, juices of beans, vetches, chick-peas, or pulse. . . . My body became extremely lean. The mark of my seat was like a camel's foot-print through the little food. The bones of my spine, when bent and straightened, were like a row of spindles through the little food. And as, in a deep well, the deep, low-lying sparkling of the waters is seen, so in my eye-sockets was seen the deep, low-lying

sparkling of my eyes through the little food. And as a bitter gourd, cut off raw, is cracked and withered through rain and sun, so was the skin of my head withered through the little food. When I thought I would touch the skin of my stomach I actually took hold of my spine. . . . When I thought I would ease myself I thereupon fell prone through the little food. To relieve my body I stroked my limbs with my hand, and as I did so the decayed hairs fell from my body through the little food.<sup>m</sup>

But one day the thought came to Buddha that self-mortification was not the way. Perhaps he was unusually hungry on that day, or some memory of loveliness stirred within him. He perceived that no new enlightenment had come to him from these austerities. "By this severity I do not attain superhuman—truly noble—knowledge and insight." On the contrary, a certain pride in his self-torture had poisoned any holiness that might have grown from it. He abandoned his asceticism, went to sit under a shade-giving tree,\* and remained there steadfast and motionless, resolving never to leave that seat until enlightenment came to him. What, he asked himself, was the source of human sorrow, suffering, sickness, old age and death? Suddenly a vision came to him of the infinite succession of deaths and births in the stream of life: he saw every death frustrated with new birth, every peace and joy balanced with new desire and discontent, new disappointment, new grief and pain. "Thus, with mind concentrated, purified, cleansed, . . . I directed my mind to the passing away and rebirth of beings. With divine, purified, superhuman vision I saw beings passing away and being reborn, low and high, of good and bad color, in happy or miserable existences, according to their *karma*"—according to that universal law by which every act of good or of evil will be rewarded or punished in this life, or in some later incarnation of the soul.

It was the vision of this apparently ridiculous succession of deaths and births that made Buddha scorn human life. Birth, he told himself, is the origin of all evil. And yet birth continues endlessly, forever replenishing the stream of human sorrow. If birth could be stopped. . . . Why is birth not stopped?† Because the law of *karma* demands new reincarnations in which the soul may atone for evil done in past existences.

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\* The *Bodhi*-tree of later Buddhist worship, still shown to tourists at Bodh-gaya.

† The philosophy of Schopenhauer stems from this point.

If, however, a man could live a life of perfect justice, of unvarying patience and kindness to all, if he could tie his thoughts to eternal things, not binding his heart to those that begin and pass away—then, perhaps, he would be spared rebirth, and for him the fountain of evil would run dry. If one could still all desires for one's self, and seek only to do good, then individuality, that first and worst delusion of mankind, might be overcome, and the soul would merge at last with unconscious infinity. What peace there would be in the heart that had cleansed itself of every personal desire!—and what heart that had not so cleansed itself could ever know peace? Happiness is possible neither here, as paganism thinks, nor hereafter, as many religions think. Only peace is possible, only the cool quietude of craving ended, only *Nirvana*.

And so, after seven years of meditation, the Enlightened One, having learned the cause of human suffering, went forth to the Holy City of Benares, and there, in the deer-park at Sarnath, preached *Nirvana* to men.

#### IV. THE TEACHING OF BUDDHA\*

*Portrait of the Master—His methods—The Four Noble Truths—  
The Eightfold Way—The Five Moral Rules—Buddha and  
Christ—Buddha's agnosticism and anti-clericalism—His  
Atheism—His soul-less psychology—The mean-  
ing of "Nirvana"*

Like the other teachers of his time, Buddha taught through conversation, lectures, and parables. Since it never occurred to him, any more than to Socrates or Christ, to put his doctrine into writing, he summarized it in *sutras* ("threads") designed to prompt the memory. As preserved for us in the remembrance of his followers these discourses unconsciously portray for us the first distinct character in India's history: a

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\* The oldest extant documents purporting to be the teaching of Buddha are the *Pitakas*, or "Baskets of the Law," prepared for the Buddhist Council of 241 B.C., accepted by it as genuine, transmitted orally for four centuries from the death of Buddha, and finally put into writing, in the Pali tongue, about 80 B.C. These *Pitakas* are divided into three groups: the *Sutta*, or tales; the *Vinaya*, or discipline; and the *Abhidhamma*, or doctrine. The *Sutta-pitaka* contains the dialogues of Buddha, which Rhys Davids ranks with those of Plato.<sup>24</sup> Strictly speaking, however, these writings give us the teaching not necessarily of Buddha himself, but only of the Buddhist schools. "Though these narratives," says Sir Charles Eliot, "are compilations which accepted new matter during several centuries, I see no reason to doubt that the oldest stratum contains the recollections of those who had seen and heard the master."<sup>25</sup>

man of strong will, authoritative and proud, but of gentle manner and speech, and of infinite benevolence. He claimed "enlightenment," but not inspiration; he never pretended that a god was speaking through him. In controversy he was more patient and considerate than any other of the great teachers of mankind. His disciples, perhaps idealizing him, represented him as fully practising *ahimsa*: "putting away the killing of living things, Gautama the recluse holds aloof from the destruction of life. He" (once a Kshatriya warrior) "has laid the cudgel and the sword aside, and ashamed of roughness, and full of mercy, he dwells compassionate and kind to all creatures that have life. . . . Putting away slander, Gautama holds himself aloof from calumny. . . . Thus does he live as a binder-together of those who are divided, an encourager of those who are friends, a peacemaker, a lover of peace, impassioned for peace, a speaker of words that make for peace."<sup>88</sup> Like Lao-tze and Christ he wished to return good for evil, love for hate; and he remained silent under misunderstanding and abuse. "If a man foolishly does me wrong, I will return to him the protection of my ungrudging love; the more evil comes from him, the more good shall come from me." When a simpleton abused him, Buddha listened in silence; but when the man had finished, Buddha asked him: "Son, if a man declined to accept a present made to him, to whom would it belong?" The man answered: "To him who offered it." "My son," said Buddha, "I decline to accept your abuse, and request you to keep it for yourself."<sup>89</sup> Unlike most saints, Buddha had a sense of humor, and knew that metaphysics without laughter is immodesty.

His method of teaching was unique, though it owed something to the Wanderers, or traveling Sophists, of his time. He walked from town to town, accompanied by his favorite disciples, and followed by as many as twelve hundred devotees. He took no thought for the morrow, but was content to be fed by some local admirer; once he scandalized his followers by eating in the home of a courtesan.<sup>90</sup> He stopped at the outskirts of a village, and pitched camp in some garden or wood, or on some riverbank. The afternoon he gave to meditation, the evening to instruction. His discourses took the form of Socratic questioning, moral parables, courteous controversy, or succinct formulas whereby he sought to compress his teaching into convenient brevity and order. His favorite *sutra* was the "Four Noble Truths," in which he expounded his view that life is pain, that pain is due to desire, and that wisdom lies in stilling all desire.

1. Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of pain: birth is painful, sickness is painful, old age is painful, sorrow, lamentation, dejection and despair are painful. . . .

2. Now, this, O monks, is the noble truth of the cause of pain: that craving, which leads to rebirth, combined with pleasure and lust, finding pleasure here and there, namely, the craving for passion, the craving for existence, the craving for non-existence.

3. Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the cessation of pain: the cessation, without a remainder, of that craving; abandonment, forsaking, release, non-attachment.

4. Now this, O monks, is the noble truth of the way that leads to the cessation of pain: this is the noble Eightfold Way: namely, right views, right intention, right speech, right action, right living, right effort, right mindfulness, right concentration."<sup>9</sup>

Buddha was convinced that pain so overbalanced pleasure in human life that it would be better never to have been born. More tears have flowed, he tells us, than all the water that is in the four great oceans.<sup>10</sup> Every pleasure seemed poisoned for him by its brevity. "Is that which is impermanent, sorrow or joy?" he asks one of his disciples; and the answer is, "Sorrow, Lord."<sup>11</sup> The basic evil, then, is *tanha*—not all desire, but selfish desire, desire directed to the advantage of the part rather than to the good of the whole; above all, sexual desire, for that leads to reproduction, which stretches out the chain of life into new suffering aimlessly. One of his disciples concluded that Buddha would approve of suicide, but Buddha reproved him; suicide would be useless, since the soul, unpurified, would be reborn in other incarnations until it achieved complete forgetfulness of self.

When his disciples asked him to define more clearly his conception of right living, he formulated for their guidance "Five Moral Rules"—commandments simple and brief, but "perhaps more comprehensive, and harder to keep, than the Decalogue":<sup>12</sup>

1. Let not one kill any living being.
2. Let not one take what is not given to him.
3. Let not one speak falsely.
4. Let not one drink intoxicating drinks.
5. Let not one be unchaste.<sup>13</sup>

Elsewhere Buddha introduced elements into his teaching strangely anticipatory of Christ. "Let a man overcome anger by kindness, evil by good. . . . Victory breeds hatred, for the conquered is unhappy. . . . Never in the world does hatred cease by hatred; hatred ceases by love."<sup>44</sup> Like Jesus he was uncomfortable in the presence of women, and hesitated long before admitting them into the Buddhist order. His favorite disciple, Ananda, once asked him:

"How are we to conduct ourselves, Lord, with regards to woman-kind?"

"As not seeing them, Ananda."

"But if we should see them, what are we to do?"

"No talking, Ananda."

"But if they should speak to us, Lord, what are we to do?"

"Keep wide awake, Ananda."<sup>45</sup>

His conception of religion was purely ethical; he cared everything about conduct, nothing about ritual or worship, metaphysics or theology. When a Brahman proposed to purify himself of his sins by bathing at Gaya, Buddha said to him: "Have thy bath here, even here, O Brahman. Be kind to all beings. If thou speakest not false, if thou killest not life, if thou takest not what is not given to thee, secure in self-denial—what wouldst thou gain by going to Gaya? Any water is Gaya to thee."<sup>46</sup> There is nothing stranger in the history of religion than the sight of Buddha founding a worldwide religion, and yet refusing to be drawn into any discussion about eternity, immortality, or God. The infinite is a myth, he says, a fiction of philosophers who have not the modesty to confess that an atom can never understand the cosmos. He smiles at the debate over the finity or infinity of the universe, quite as if he foresaw the futile astromythology of physicists and mathematicians who debate the same question today. He refuses to express any opinion as to whether the world had a beginning or will have an end; whether the soul is the same as the body, or distinct from it; whether, even for the greatest saint, there is to be any reward in any heaven. He calls such questions "the jungle, the desert, the puppet-show, the writhing, the entanglement, of speculation,"<sup>47</sup> and will have nothing to do with them; they lead only to feverish disputation, personal resentments, and sorrow; they never lead to wisdom and peace. Saintliness and content lie not in knowledge of the



universe and God, but simply in selfless and beneficent living." And then, with scandalous humor, he suggests that the gods themselves, if they existed, could not answer these questions.

Once upon a time, Kevaddha, there occurred to a certain brother in this very company of the brethren a doubt on the following point: "Where now do these four great elements—earth, water, fire and wind—pass away, leaving no trace behind?" So that brother worked himself up into such a state of ecstasy that the way leading to the world of the Gods became clear to his ecstatic vision.

Then that brother, Kevaddha, went up to the realm of the Four Great Kings, and said to the gods thereof: "Where, my friends, do the four great elements—earth, water, fire and wind—cease, leaving no trace behind?"

And when he had thus spoken the gods in the Heaven of the Four Great Kings said to him: "We, brother, do not know that. But there are the Four Great Kings, more potent and more glorious than we. They will know it."

Then that brother, Kevaddha, went to the Four Great Kings (and put the same question, and was sent on, by a similar reply, to the Thirty-three, who sent him on to their king, Sakka; who sent him on to the Yama gods, who sent him on to their king, Suyama; who sent him on to the Tusita gods, who sent him on to their king, Santusita; who sent him on to the Nimmana-rati gods, who sent him on to their king, Sunimmita; who sent him on to the Para-nimmita Vasavatti gods, who sent him on to their king, Vasavatti, who sent him on to the gods of the Brahma-world).

Then that brother, Kevaddha, became so absorbed by self-concentration that the way to the Brahma-world became clear to his mind thus pacified. And he drew near to the gods of the retinue of Brahma, and said: "Where, my friends, do the four great elements—earth, water, fire and wind—cease, leaving no trace behind?"

And when he had thus spoken, the gods of the retinue of Brahma replied: "We, brother, do not know that. But there is Brahma, the great Brahma, the Supreme One, the Mighty One, the All-seeing One, the Ruler, the Lord of all, the Controller, the Creator, the Chief of all, . . . the Ancient of days, the Father of all that are and are to be! He is more potent and more glorious than we. He will know it."

"Where, then, is that great Brahma now?"

"We, brother, know not where Brahma is, nor why Brahma is,

nor whence. But, brother, when the signs of his coming appear, when the light ariseth, and the glory shineth, then will he be manifest. For that is the portent of the manifestation of Brahma when the light ariseth, and the glory shineth."

And it was not long, Kevaddha, before that great Brahma became manifest. And that brother drew near to him, and said: "Where, my friend, do the four great elements—earth, water, fire and wind—cease, leaving no trace behind?"

And when he had thus spoken that great Brahma said to him: "I, brother, am the great Brahma, the Supreme, the Mighty, the All-seeing, the Ruler, the Lord of all, the Controller, the Creator, the Chief of all, appointing to each his place, the Ancient of days, the Father of all that are and are to be!"

Then that brother answered Brahma, and said: "I did not ask you, friend, as to whether you were indeed all that you now say. But I ask you where the four great elements—earth, water, fire and wind—cease, leaving no trace behind?"

Then again, Kevaddha, Brahma gave the same reply. And that brother yet a third time put to Brahma his question as before.

Then, Kevaddha, the great Brahma took that brother and led him aside, and said: "These gods, the retinue of Brahma, hold me, brother, to be such that there is nothing I cannot see, nothing I have not understood, nothing I have not realized. Therefore I gave no answer in their presence. I do not know, brother, where those four great elements—earth, water, fire and wind—cease, leaving no trace behind."<sup>250</sup>

When some students remind him that the Brahmans claim to know the solutions of these problems, he laughs them off: "There are, brethren, some recluses and Brahmans who wriggle like eels; and when a question is put to them on this or that they resort to equivocation, to eel-wriggling."<sup>251</sup> If ever he is sharp it is against the priests of his time; he scorns their assumption that the *Vedas* were inspired by the gods,<sup>252</sup> and he scandalizes the caste-proud Brahmans by accepting into his order the members of any caste. He does not explicitly condemn the caste-system, but he tells his disciples, plainly enough: "Go into all lands and preach this gospel. Tell them that the poor and the lowly, the rich and the high, are all one, and that all castes unite in this religion as do the rivers in the sea."<sup>253</sup> He denounces the notion of sacrificing to the gods, and looks with horror upon the slaughter of animals for these rites;<sup>254</sup> he rejects all cult and worship of

supernatural beings, all *mantras* and incantations, all asceticism and all prayer.<sup>77</sup> Quietly, and without controversy, he offers a religion absolutely free of dogma and priestcraft, and proclaims a way of salvation open to infidels and believers alike.

At times this most famous of Hindu saints passes from agnosticism to outright atheism.<sup>78\*</sup> He does not go out of his way to deny deity, and occasionally he speaks as if Brahma were a reality rather than an ideal;<sup>79</sup> nor does he forbid the popular worship of the gods.<sup>80</sup> But he smiles at the notion of sending up prayers to the Unknowable; "it is foolish," he says, "to suppose that another can cause us happiness or misery"<sup>81</sup>—these are always the product of our own behavior and our own desires. He refuses to rest his moral code upon supernatural sanctions of any kind; he offers no heaven, no purgatory, and no hell.<sup>82</sup> He is too sensitive to the suffering and killing involved in the biological process to suppose that they have been consciously willed by a personal divinity; these cosmic blunders, he thinks, outweigh the evidences of design.<sup>83</sup> In this scene of order and confusion, of good and evil, he finds no principle of permanence, no center of everlasting reality,<sup>84</sup> but only a whirl and flux of obstinate life, in which the one metaphysical ultimate is change.

As he proposes a theology without a deity, so he offers a psychology without a soul; he repudiates animism in every form, even in the case of man. He agrees with Heraclitus and Bergson about the world, and with Hume about the mind. All that we know is our sensations; therefore, so far as we can see, all matter is force, all substance is motion. Life is change, a neutral stream of becoming and extinction; the "soul" is a myth which, for the convenience of our weak brains, we unwarrantably posit behind the flow of conscious states.<sup>85</sup> This "transcendental unity of apperception," this "mind" that weaves sensations and perceptions into thought, is a ghost; all that exists is the sensations and perceptions themselves, falling automatically into memories and ideas.<sup>86</sup> Even the precious "ego" is not an entity distinct from these mental states; it is merely the continuity of these states, the remembrance of earlier by later states, together with the mental and moral habits, the dispositions and tendencies, of the organism.<sup>87</sup> The succession of these states is caused not by a mythical "will" superadded to them, but by the determinism of heredity, habit,

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\* In Buddha, says Sir Charles Eliot, "the world is not thought of as the handiwork of a divine personality, nor the moral law as his will. The fact that religion can exist without these ideas is of capital importance."<sup>77</sup>

environment and circumstance."<sup>77</sup> This fluid mind that is only mental states, this soul or ego that is only a character or prejudice formed by helpless inheritance and transient experience, can have no immortality in any sense that implies the continuance of the individual.<sup>78</sup> Even the saint, even Buddha himself, will not, as a personality, survive death.<sup>79</sup>

But if this is so, how can there be rebirth? If there is no soul, how can it pass into other existences, to be punished for the sins of this embodiment? Here is the weakest point in Buddha's philosophy; he never quite faces the contradiction between his rationalistic psychology and his uncritical acceptance of reincarnation. This belief is so universal in India that almost every Hindu accepts it as an axiom or assumption, and hardly bothers to prove it; the brevity and multiplicity of the generations there suggests irresistibly the transmigration of vital force, or—to speak theologically—of the soul. Buddha received the notion along with the air he breathed; it is the one thing that he seems never to have doubted.<sup>80</sup> He took the Wheel of Rebirth and the Law of *Karma* for granted; his one thought was how to escape from that Wheel, how to achieve *Nirvana* here, and annihilation hereafter.

But what is *Nirvana*? It is difficult to find an erroneous answer to this question; for the Master left the point obscure, and his followers have given the word every meaning under the sun. In general Sanskrit use it meant "extinguished"—as of a lamp or fire. The Buddhist Scriptures use it as signifying: (1) a state of happiness attainable in this life through the complete elimination of selfish desires; (2) the liberation of the individual from rebirth; (3) the annihilation of the individual consciousness; (4) the union of the individual with God; (5) a heaven of happiness after death. In the teaching of Buddha it seemed to mean the extinction of all individual desire, and the reward of such selflessness—escape from rebirth.<sup>81</sup> In Buddhist literature the term has often a terrestrial sense, for the *Arhat*, or saint, is repeatedly described as achieving it in this life, by acquiring its seven constituent parts: self-possession, investigation into the truth, energy, calm, joy, concentration, and magnanimity.<sup>82</sup> These are its content, but hardly its productive cause: the cause and source of *Nirvana* is the extinction of selfish desire; and *Nirvana*, in most early contexts, comes to mean the painless peace that rewards the moral annihilation of the self.<sup>83</sup> "Now," says Buddha, "this is the noble truth as to the passing of pain. Verily, it is the passing away so that no passion remains, the giving up, the getting rid of, the emancipation from, the harboring no longer of, this

craving thirst"<sup>79</sup>—this fever of self-seeking desire. In the body of the Master's teaching it is almost always synonymous with bliss,<sup>80</sup> the quiet content of the soul that no longer worries about itself. But complete *Nirvana* includes annihilation: the reward of the highest saintliness is never to be reborn.<sup>81</sup>

In the end, says Buddha, we perceive the absurdity of moral and psychological individualism. Our fretting selves are not really separate beings and powers, but passing ripples on the stream of life, little knots forming and unraveling in the wind-blown mesh of fate. When we see ourselves as parts of a whole, when we reform our selves and our desires in terms of the whole, then our personal disappointments and defeats, our varied suffering and inevitable death, no longer sadden us as bitterly as before; they are lost in the amplitude of infinity. When we have learned to love not our separate life, but all men and all living things, then at last we shall find peace.

#### V. THE LAST DAYS OF BUDDHA

##### *His miracles—He visits his father's house—The Buddhist monks—Death*

From this exalted philosophy we pass to the simple legends which are all that we have concerning Buddha's later life and death. Despite his scorn of miracles, his disciples brewed a thousand tales of the marvels that he wrought. He wafted himself magically across the Ganges in a moment; the tooth-pick he had let fall sprouted into a tree; at the end of one of his sermons the "thousand-fold world-system shook."<sup>82</sup> When his enemy Devadatta sent a fierce elephant against him, Buddha "pervaded it with love," and it was quite subdued.<sup>83</sup> Arguing from such pleasantries Senart and others have concluded that the legend of Buddha has been formed on the basis of ancient sun myths.<sup>84</sup> It is unimportant; Buddha means for us the ideas attributed to Buddha in the Buddhist literature; and this Buddha exists.

The Buddhist Scriptures paint a pleasing picture of him. Many disciples gathered around him, and his fame as a sage spread through the cities of northern India. When his father heard that Buddha was near Kapilavastu he sent a messenger to him with an invitation to come and spend a day in his boyhood home. He went, and his father, who had mourned the loss of a prince, rejoiced, for a while, over the return of a saint.

Buddha's wife, who had been faithful to him during all their separation, fell down before him, clasped his ankles, placed his feet about her head, and revered him as a god. Then King Shuddhodhana told Buddha of her great love: "Lord, my daughter (in-law), when she heard that you were wearing yellow robes (as a monk), put on yellow robes; when she heard of your having one meal a day, herself took one meal; when she knew that you had given up a large bed, she lay on a narrow couch; and when she knew that you had given up garlands and scents, she gave them up." Buddha blessed her, and went his way.\*

But now his son, Rahula, came to him, and also loved him. "Pleasant is your shadow, ascetic," he said. Though Rahula's mother had hoped to see the youth made king, the Master accepted him into the Buddhist order. Then another prince, Nanda, was called to be consecrated as heir-apparent to the throne; but Nanda, as if in a trance, left the ceremony unfinished, abandoned a kingdom, and going to Buddha, asked that he, too, might be permitted to join the Order. When King Shuddhodhana heard of this he was sad, and asked a boon of Buddha. "When the Lord abandoned the world," he said, "it was no small pain to me; so when Nanda went; and even more so with Rahula. The love of a son cuts through the skin, through the hide, the flesh, the sinew, the marrow. Grant, Lord, that thy noble ones may not confer the ordination on a son without the permission of his father and mother." Buddha consented, and made such permission a prerequisite to ordination.<sup>61</sup>

Already, it seems, this religion without priesthood had developed an order of monks dangerously like the Hindu priests. Buddha would not be long dead before they would surround themselves with all the paraphernalia of the Brahmans. Indeed it was from the ranks of the Brahmans that the first converts came; and then from the richest youth of Benares and the neighboring towns. These *Bhikkhus*, or monks, practised in Buddha's days a simple rule. They saluted one another, and all those to whom they spoke, with an admirable phrase: "Peace to all beings."<sup>62</sup> They were not to kill any living thing; they were never to take anything save what was given them; they were to avoid falsehood and slander; they were to heal divisions and encourage concord; they were always to show compassion for all men and all animals; they were to shun all amusements of sense or flesh, all music, *nautch* dances, shows, games, luxuries,

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\* Cf. the beautiful form of greeting used by the Jews: *Shalom aleichem*—"Peace be with you." In the end men do not ask for happiness, but only for peace.

idle conversation, argument, or fortune-telling; they were to have nothing to do with business, or with any form of buying or selling; above all, they were to abandon incontinence, and live apart from women, in perfect chastity.<sup>66</sup> Yielding to many soft entreaties, Buddha allowed women to enter the Order as nuns, but he never completely reconciled himself to this move. "If, Ananda," he said, "women had not received permission to enter the Order, the pure religion would have lasted long, the good law would have stood fast a thousand years. But since they have received that permission, it will now stand fast for only five hundred years."<sup>67</sup> He was right. The great Order, or *Sangha*, has survived to our own time; but it has long since corrupted the Master's doctrine with magic, polytheism, and countless superstitions.

Towards the end of his long life his followers already began to deify him, despite his challenge to them to doubt him and to think for themselves. Now, says one of the last Dialogues,

the venerable Sariputta came to the place where the Exalted One was, and having saluted him, took his seat respectfully at his side, and said:

"Lord, such faith have I in the Exalted One that methinks there never has been, nor will there be, nor is there now, any other, whether Wanderer or Brahman, who is greater and wiser than the Exalted One . . . as regards the higher wisdom."

"Grand and bold are the words of thy mouth, Sariputta" (answered the Master); "verily, thou hast burst forth into a song of ecstasy! Of course, then, thou hast known all the Exalted Ones of the past, . . . comprehending their minds with yours, and aware what their conduct was, what their wisdom, . . . and what the emancipation they attained to?"

"Not so, O Lord!"

"Of course, then, thou hast perceived all the Exalted Ones of the future, . . . comprehending their whole minds with yours?"

"Not so, O Lord!"

"But at least, then, O Sariputta, thou knowest me, . . . and hast penetrated my mind?" . . .

"Not even that, O Lord."

"You see, then, Sariputta, that you know not the hearts of the Able, Awakened Ones of the past and of the future. Why, therefore, are your words so grand and bold? Why do you burst forth into such a song of ecstasy?"<sup>68</sup>

And to Ananda he taught his greatest and noblest lesson:

“And whosoever, Ananda, either now or after I am dead, shall be a lamp unto themselves, and a refuge unto themselves, shall betake themselves to no external refuge, but, holding fast to the Truth as their lamp, . . . shall not look for refuge to any one besides themselves—it is they . . . who shall reach the very topmost height! But they must be anxious to learn!”<sup>788</sup>

He died in 483 B.C., at the age of eighty. “Now then, O monks,” he said to them as his last words, “I address you. Subject to decay are compound things. Strive with earnestness.”<sup>789</sup>



# From Alexander to Aurangzeb

## I. CHANDRAGUPTA

*Alexander in India—Chandragupta the liberator—The people—  
The university of Taxila—The royal palace—A day in the life  
of a king—An older Machiavelli—Administration—  
Law—Public health—Transport and roads—Municipal government*

IN THE year 327 B.C. Alexander the Great, pushing on from Persia, marched over the Hindu Kush and descended upon India. For a year he campaigned among the northwestern states that had formed one of the Persian Empire's richest provinces, exacting supplies for his troops and gold for his treasury. Early in 326 B.C. he crossed the Indus, fought his way slowly through Taxila and Rawalpindi to the south and east, encountered the army of King Porus, defeated 30,000 infantry, 4,000 cavalry, 300 chariots and 200 elephants, and slew 12,000 men. When Porus, having fought to the last, surrendered, Alexander, admiring his courage, stature and fine features, bade him say what treatment he wished to receive. "Treat me, Alexander," he answered, "in a kingly way." "For my own sake," said Alexander, "thou shalt be so treated; for thine own sake do thou demand what is pleasing to thee." But Porus said that everything was included in what he had asked. Alexander was much pleased with this reply; he made Porus king of all conquered India as a Macedonian tributary, and found him thereafter a faithful and energetic ally.<sup>1</sup> Alexander wished then to advance even to the eastern sea, but his soldiers protested. After much oratory and pouting he yielded to them, and led them—through patriotically hostile tribes that made his wearied troops fight almost every foot of the way—down the Hydaspes and up the coast through Gedrosia to Baluchistan. When he arrived at Susa, twenty months after turning back from his conquests, his army was but a miserable fragment of that which had crossed into India with him three years before.

Seven years later all trace of Macedonian authority had already disappeared from India.<sup>4</sup> The chief agent of its removal was one of the most romantic figures in Indian history, a lesser warrior but a greater ruler than Alexander. Chandragupta was a young Kshatriya noble exiled from Magadha by the ruling Nanda family, to which he was related. Helped by his subtle Machiavellian adviser, Kautilya Chanakya, the youth organized a small army, overcame the Macedonian garrisons, and declared India free. Then he advanced upon Pataliputra,\* capital of the Magadha kingdom, fomented a revolution, seized the throne, and established that Mauryan Dynasty which was to rule Hindustan and Afghanistan for one hundred and thirty-seven years. Subordinating his courage to Kautilya's unscrupulous wisdom, Chandragupta soon made his government the most powerful then existing in the world. When Megasthenes came to Pataliputra as ambassador from Seleucus Nicator, King of Syria, he was amazed to find a civilization which he described to the incredulous Greeks—still near their zenith—as entirely equal to their own.<sup>5</sup>

The Greek gave a pleasant, perhaps a lenient, account, of Hindu life in his time. It struck him as a favorable contrast with his own nation that there was no slavery in India;† and that though the population was divided into castes according to occupations, it accepted these divisions as natural and tolerable. "They live happily enough," the ambassador reported,

being simple in their manners, and frugal. They never drink wine except at sacrifice. . . . The simplicity of their laws and their contracts is proved by the fact that they seldom go to law. They have no suits about pledges and deposits, nor do they require either seals or witnesses, but make their deposits and confide in each other. . . . Truth and virtue they hold alike in esteem. . . . The greater part of the soil is under irrigation, and consequently bears two crops in the course of the year. . . . It is accordingly affirmed that famine has never visited India, and that there has never been a general scarcity in the supply of nourishing food.<sup>6</sup>

The oldest of the two thousand cities<sup>7</sup> of northern India in Chandragupta's time was Taxila, twenty miles northwest of the modern Rawalpindi. Arrian describes it as "a large and prosperous city"; Strabo says

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\* The modern Patna.

† "This is a great thing in India," says Arrian, "that all the inhabitants are free, not a single Indian being a slave."<sup>8</sup>

it "is large, and has most excellent laws." It was both a military and a university town, strategically situated on the main road to Western Asia, and containing the most famous of the several universities possessed by India at that time. Students flocked to Taxila as in the Middle Ages they flocked to Paris; there all the arts and sciences could be studied under eminent professors, and the medical school especially was held in high repute throughout the Oriental world.\*

Megasthenes describes Chandragupta's capital, Pataliputra, as nine miles in length and almost two miles in width.<sup>10</sup> The palace of the King was of timber, but the Greek ambassador ranked it as excelling the royal residences of Susa and Ecbatana, being surpassed only by those at Persepolis. Its pillars were plated with gold, and ornamented with designs of bird-life and foliage; its interior was sumptuously furnished and adorned with precious metals and stones.<sup>11</sup> There was a certain Oriental ostentation in this culture, as in the use of gold vessels six feet in diameter;<sup>12</sup> but an English historian concludes, from the testimony of the literary, pictorial and material remains, that "in the fourth and third centuries before Christ the command of the Maurya monarch over luxuries of all kinds and skilled craftsmanship in all the manual arts was not inferior to that enjoyed by the Mogul emperors eighteen centuries later."<sup>13</sup>

In this palace Chandragupta, having won the throne by violence, lived for twenty-four years as in a gilded jail. Occasionally he appeared in public, clad in fine muslin embroidered with purple and gold, and carried in a golden palanquin or on a gorgeously accoutred elephant. Except when he rode out to the hunt, or otherwise amused himself, he found his time crowded with the business of his growing realm. His days were divided into sixteen periods of ninety minutes each. In the first he arose, and prepared himself by meditation; in the second he studied the reports of his agents, and issued secret instructions; the third he spent with his councillors in the Hall of Private Audience; in the fourth he attended to state finances and national defense; in the fifth he heard the petitions and suits of his subjects; in the sixth he bathed and dined, and read religious literature; in the seventh he received taxes and tribute, and made official

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\* The excavations of Sir John Marshall on the site of Taxila have unearthed delicately carved stones, highly polished statuary, coins as old as 600 B.C., and glassware of a fine quality never bettered in later India. "It is manifest," says Vincent Smith, "that a high degree of material civilization had been attained, and that all the arts and crafts incident to the life of a wealthy, cultured city were familiar."<sup>10</sup>

appointments; in the eighth he again met his Council, and heard the reports of his spies, including the courtesans whom he used for this purpose;<sup>14</sup> the ninth he devoted to relaxation and prayer, the tenth and eleventh to military matters, the twelfth again to secret reports, the thirteenth to the evening bath and repast, the fourteenth, fifteenth and sixteenth to sleep.<sup>15</sup> Perhaps the historian tells us what Chandragupta might have been, or how Kautilya wished the people to picture him, rather than what he really was. Truth does not often escape from palaces.

The actual direction of government was in the hands of the crafty vizier. Kautilya was a Brahman who knew the political value of religion, but took no moral guidance from it; like our modern dictators he believed that every means was justifiable if used in the service of the state. He was unscrupulous and treacherous, but never to his King; he served Chandragupta through exile, defeat, adventure, intrigue, murder and victory, and by his wily wisdom made the empire of his master the greatest that India had ever known. Like the author of *The Prince*, Kautilya saw fit to preserve in writing his formulas for warfare and diplomacy; tradition ascribes to him the *Arthashastra*, the oldest book in extant Sanskrit literature.<sup>16</sup> As an example of its delicate realism we may take its list of means for capturing a fort: "Intrigue, spies, winning over the enemy's people, siege, and assault"<sup>17</sup>—a wise economy of physical effort.

The government made no pretense to democracy, and was probably the most efficient that India has ever had.<sup>18</sup> Akbar, greatest of the Moguls, "had nothing like it, and it may be doubted if any of the ancient Greek cities were better organized."<sup>19</sup> It was based frankly upon military power. Chandragupta, if we may trust Megasthenes (who should be as suspect as any foreign correspondent) kept an army of 600,000 foot, 30,000 horse, 9,000 elephants, and an unnamed number of chariots.<sup>20</sup> The peasantry and the Brahmans were exempt from military service; and Strabo describes the farmers tilling the soil in peace and security in the midst of war.<sup>21</sup> The power of the King was theoretically unlimited, but in practice it was restricted by a Council which—sometimes with the King, sometimes in his absence—initiated legislation, regulated national finances and foreign affairs, and appointed all the more important officers of state. Megasthenes testifies to the "high character and wisdom" of Chandragupta's councillors, and to their effective power.<sup>22</sup>

The government was organized into departments with well-defined duties and a carefully graded hierarchy of officials, managing respectively revenue,

customs, frontiers, passports, communications, excise, mines, agriculture, cattle, commerce, warehouses, navigation, forests, public games, prostitution, and the mint. The Superintendent of Excise controlled the sale of drugs and intoxicating drinks, restricted the number and location of taverns, and the quantity of liquors which they might sell. The Superintendent of Mines leased mining areas to private persons, who paid a fixed rent and a share of the profits to the government; a similar system applied to agriculture, for all the land was owned by the state. The Superintendent of Public Games supervised the gambling halls, supplied dice, charged a fee for their use, and gathered in for the treasury five per cent of all money taken in by the "bank." The Superintendent of Prostitution looked after public women, controlled their charges and expenditures, appropriated their earnings for two days of each month, and kept two of them in the royal palace for entertainment and intelligence service. Taxes fell upon every profession, occupation and industry; and in addition rich men were from time to time persuaded to make "benevolences" to the King. The government regulated prices and periodically assayed weights and measures; it carried on some manufactures in state factories, sold vegetables, and kept a monopoly of mines, salt, timber, fine fabrics, horses and elephants.<sup>23</sup>

Law was administered in the village by local headmen, or by *panchayats*—village councils of five men; in towns, districts and provinces by inferior and superior courts; at the capital by the royal council as a supreme court, and by the King as a court of last appeal. Penalties were severe, and included mutilation, torture and death, usually on the principle of *lex talionis*, or equivalent retaliation. But the government was no mere engine of repression; it attended to sanitation and public health, maintained hospitals and poor-relief stations, distributed in famine years the food kept in state warehouses for such emergencies, forced the rich to contribute to the assistance of the destitute, and organized great public works to care for the unemployed in depression years.<sup>24</sup>

The Department of Navigation regulated water transport, and protected travelers on rivers and seas; it maintained bridges and harbors, and provided government ferries in addition to those that were privately managed and owned<sup>25</sup>—and admirable arrangement whereby public competition could check private plunder, and private competition could discourage official extravagance. The Department of Communications built and repaired roads throughout the empire, from the narrow wagon-tracks of the villages to trade routes thirty-two feet, and royal roads sixty-four feet, wide. One of these imperial highways extended twelve hundred miles from Pataliputra to the northwestern frontier<sup>26</sup>—a distance equal to half the transcontinental spread of the United States. At approximately every mile, says Megasthenes, these

roads were marked with pillars indicating directions and distances to various destinations.<sup>97</sup> Shade-trees, wells, police-stations and hotels were provided at regular intervals along the route.<sup>98</sup> Transport was by chariots, palanquins, bullock-carts, horses, camels, elephants, asses and men. Elephants were a luxury usually confined to royalty and officialdom, and so highly valued that a woman's virtue was thought a moderate price to pay for one of them.\*

The same method of departmental administration was applied to the government of the cities. Pataliputra was ruled by a commission of thirty men, divided into six groups. One group regulated industry; another supervised strangers, assigning to them lodgings and attendants, and watching their movements; another kept a record of births and deaths; another licensed merchants, regulated the sale of produce, and tested measures and weights; another controlled the sale of manufactured articles; another collected a tax of ten per cent on all sales. "In short," says Havell, "Pataliputra in the fourth century B.C. seems to have been a thoroughly well-organized city, and administered according to the best principles of social science."<sup>99a</sup> "The perfection of the arrangements thus indicated," says Vincent Smith, "is astonishing, even when exhibited in outline. Examination of the departmental details increases our wonder that such an organization could have been planned and efficiently operated in India in 300 B.C."<sup>99b</sup>

The one defect of this government was autocracy, and therefore continual dependence upon force and spies. Like every autocrat, Chandragupta held his power precariously, always fearing revolt and assassination. Every night he used a different bedroom, and always he was surrounded by guards. Hindu tradition, accepted by European historians, tells how, when a long famine (*pace* Megasthenes) came upon his kingdom, Chandragupta, in despair at his helplessness, abdicated his throne, lived for twelve years thereafter as a Jain ascetic, and then starved himself to death. "All things considered," said Voltaire, "the life of a gondolier is preferable to that of a doge; but I believe the difference is so trifling that it is not worth the trouble of examining."<sup>100</sup>

\* "Their women, who are very chaste, and would not go astray for any other reason, on the receipt of an elephant have communion with the donor. The Indians do not think it disgraceful to prostitute themselves for an elephant, and to the women it even seems an honor that their beauty should appear equal in value to an elephant."—Arrian, *Indica*, xvii. <sup>1</sup>

## II. THE PHILOSOPHER-KING

*Ashoka—The Edict of Tolerance—Ashoka's missionaries—His failure—His success*

Chandragupta's successor, Bindusara, was apparently a man of some intellectual inclination. He is said to have asked Antiochos, King of Syria, to make him a present of a Greek philosopher; for a real Greek philosopher, wrote Bindusara, he would pay a high price.<sup>80</sup> The proposal could not be complied with, since Antiochos found no philosophers for sale; but chance atoned by giving Bindusara a philosopher for his son.

Ashoka Vardhana mounted the throne in 273 B.C. He found himself ruler of a vaster empire than any Indian monarch before him: Afghanistan, Baluchistan, and all of modern India but the extreme south—*Tamila-kam*, or Tamil Land. For a time he governed in the spirit of his grandfather Chandragupta, cruelly but well. Yuan Chwang, a Chinese traveler who spent many years in India in the seventh century A.D., tells us that the prison maintained by Ashoka north of the capital was still remembered in Hindu tradition as "Ashoka's Hell." There, said his informants, all the tortures of any orthodox Inferno had been used in the punishment of criminals; to which the King added an edict that no one who entered that dungeon should ever come out of it alive. But one day a Buddhist saint, imprisoned there without cause, and flung into a cauldron of hot water, refused to boil. The jailer sent word to Ashoka, who came, saw, and marveled. When the King turned to leave, the jailer reminded him that according to his own edict he must not leave the prison alive. The King admitted the force of the remark, and ordered the jailer to be thrown into the cauldron.

On returning to his palace Ashoka, we are told, underwent a profound conversion. He gave instructions that the prison should be demolished, and that the penal code should be made more lenient. At the same time he learned that his troops had won a great victory over the rebellious Kalinga tribe, had slaughtered thousands of the rebels, and had taken many prisoners. Ashoka was moved to remorse at the thought of all this "violence, slaughter, and separation" of captives "from those whom they love." He ordered the prisoners freed, restored their lands to the Kalingas, and sent them a message of apology which had no precedents and has had few imitations. Then he joined the Buddhist Order,



FIG. 39—*Burning Ghat at Calcutta*  
Bronson de Cou, from Ewing Galloway, N. Y.



FIG. 40—"Holy Men" at Benares





FIG. 41.—A fresco at Ajanta

wore for a time the garb of a monk, gave up hunting and the eating of meat, and entered upon the Eightfold Noble Way.<sup>21</sup>

It is at present impossible to say how much of this is myth, and how much is history; nor can we discern, at this distance, the motives of the King. Perhaps he saw the growth of Buddhism, and thought that its code of generosity and peace might provide a convenient regimen for his people, saving countless policemen. In the eleventh year of his reign he began to issue the most remarkable edicts in the history of government, and commanded that they should be carved upon rocks and pillars in simple phrase and local dialects, so that any literate Hindu might be able to understand them. The Rock Edicts have been found in almost every part of India; of the pillars ten remain in place, and the position of twenty others has been determined. In these edicts we find the Emperor accepting the Buddhist faith completely, and applying it resolutely throughout the last sphere of human affairs in which we should have expected to find it—statesmanship. It is as if some modern empire had suddenly announced that henceforth it would practice Christianity.

Though these edicts are Buddhist they will not seem to us entirely religious. They assume a future life, and thereby suggest how soon the scepticism of Buddha had been replaced by the faith of his followers. But they express no belief in, make no mention of, a personal God.<sup>22</sup> Neither is there any word in them about Buddha. The edicts are not interested in theology: the Sarnath Edict asks for harmony within the Church, and prescribes penalties for those who weaken it with schism;<sup>23</sup> but other edicts repeatedly enjoin religious tolerance. One must give alms to Brahmans as well as to Buddhist priests; one must not speak ill of other men's faiths. The King announces that all his subjects are his beloved children, and that he will not discriminate against any of them because of their diverse creeds.<sup>24</sup> Rock Edict XII speaks with almost contemporary pertinence:

His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King does reverence to men of all sects, whether ascetics or householders, by gifts and various forms of reverence.

His Sacred Majesty, however, cares not so much for gifts or external reverence, as that there should be a growth of the essence of the matter in all sects. The growth of the essence of the matter assumes various forms, but the root of it is restraint of speech; to wit, a man must not do reverence to his own sect, or disparage that

of another, without reason. Depreciation should be for specific reasons only, because the sects of other people all deserve reverence for some reason or another.

By thus acting a man exalts his own sect, and at the same time does service to the sects of other people. By acting contrariwise a man hurts his own sect, and does disservice to the sects of other people. . . . Concord is meritorious.

"The essence of the matter" is explained more clearly in the Second Pillar Edict. "The Law of Piety is excellent. But wherein consists the Law of Piety? In these things: to wit, little impiety, many good deeds, compassion, liberality, truthfulness, purity." To set an example Ashoka ordered his officials everywhere to regard the people as his children, to treat them without impatience or harshness, never to torture them, and never to imprison them without good cause; and he commanded the officials to read these instructions periodically to the people.<sup>28</sup>

Did these moral edicts have any result in improving the conduct of the people? Perhaps they had something to do with spreading the idea of *ahimsa*, and encouraging abstinence from meat and alcoholic drinks among the upper classes of India.<sup>29</sup> Ashoka himself had all the confidence of a reformer in the efficacy of his petrified sermons: in Rock Edict IV he announces that marvelous results have already appeared; and his summary gives us a clearer conception of his doctrine:

Now, by reason of the practice of piety by His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King, the reverberation of the war-drums has become the reverberation of the Law. . . . As for many years before has not happened, now, by reason of the inculcation of the Law of Piety by His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King, (there is) increased abstention from the sacrificial slaughter of living creatures, abstention from the killing of animate beings, seemly behavior to relatives, seemly behavior to Brahmans, hearkening to father and mother, hearkening to elders. Thus, as in many other ways, the practice of the Law (of Piety) has increased, and His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King will make such practice of the Law increase further.

The sons, grandsons and great-grandsons of His Sacred and Gracious Majesty the King will cause this practice of the Law to increase until the eon of universal destruction.

The good King exaggerated the piety of men and the loyalty of sons. He himself labored arduously for the new religion; he made himself head of the Buddhist Church, lavished gifts upon it, built 84,000 monasteries for it,<sup>37</sup> and in its name established throughout his kingdom hospitals for men and animals.<sup>38</sup> He sent Buddhist missionaries to all parts of India and Ceylon, even to Syria, Egypt and Greece,<sup>39</sup> where, perhaps, they helped to prepare for the ethics of Christ;<sup>40</sup> and shortly after his death missionaries left India to preach the gospel of Buddha in Tibet, China, Mongolia and Japan. In addition to this activity in religion, Ashoka gave himself zealously to the secular administration of his empire; his days of labor were long, and he kept himself available to his aides for public business at all hours.<sup>41</sup>

His outstanding fault was egotism; it is difficult to be at once modest and a reformer. His self-respect shines out in every edict, and makes him more completely the brother of Marcus Aurelius. He failed to perceive that the Brahmans hated him and only bided their time to destroy him, as the priests of Thebes had destroyed Ikhnaton a thousand years before. Not only the Brahmans, who had been given to slaughtering animals for themselves and their gods, but many thousands of hunters and fishermen resented the edicts that set such severe limitations upon the taking of animal life; even the peasants growled at the command that "chaff must not be set on fire along with the living things in it."<sup>42</sup> Half the empire waited hopefully for Ashoka's death.

Yuan Chwang tells us that according to Buddhist tradition Ashoka in his last years was deposed by his grandson, who acted with the aid of court officials. Gradually all power was taken from the old King, and his gifts to the Buddhist Church came to an end. Ashoka's own allowance of goods, even of food, was cut down, until one day his whole portion was half an *amalaka* fruit. The King gazed upon it sadly, and then sent it to his Buddhist brethren, as all that he had to give.<sup>43</sup> But in truth we know nothing of his later years, not even the year of his death. Within a generation after his passing, his empire, like Ikhnaton's, crumbled to pieces. As it became evident that the sovereignty of the Kingdom of Magadha was maintained rather by the inertia of tradition than by the organization of force, state after state renounced its adherence to the King of Kings at Pataliputra. Descendants of Ashoka continued to rule Magadha till the seventh century after Christ; but the Maurya Dynasty that Chandragupta had founded came to an end when King Brihadratha

was assassinated. States are built not on the ideals but on the nature of men.

In the political sense Ashoka had failed; in another sense he had accomplished one of the greatest tasks in history. Within two hundred years after his death Buddhism had spread throughout India, and was entering upon the bloodless conquest of Asia. If to this day, from Kandy in Ceylon to Kamakura in Japan, the placid face of Gautama bids men be gentle to one another and love peace, it is partly because a dreamer, perhaps a saint, once held the throne of India.

### III. THE GOLDEN AGE OF INDIA

*An epoch of invasions—The Kushan kings—The Gupta Empire—  
The travels of Fa-Hien—The revival of letters—The Huns  
in India—Harsha the generous—The travels of Yuan  
Chwang*

From the death of Ashoka to the empire of the Guptas—i.e., for a period of almost six hundred years—Hindu inscriptions and documents are so few that the history of this interval is lost in obscurity.<sup>4</sup> It was not necessarily a Dark Age; great universities like those at Taxila continued to function, and in the northwestern portion of India the influence of Persia in architecture, and of Greece in sculpture, produced a flourishing civilization in the wake of Alexander's invasion. In the first and second centuries before Christ, Syrians, Greeks and Scythians poured down into the Punjab, conquered it, and established there, for some three hundred years, this Greco-Bactrian culture. In the first century of what we so provincially call the Christian Era the Kushans, a central Asian tribe akin to the Turks, captured Kabul, and from that city as capital extended their power throughout northwestern India and most of Central Asia. In the reign of their greatest king, Kanishka, the arts and sciences progressed: Greco-Buddhist sculpture produced some of its fairest masterpieces, fine buildings were reared in Peshawar, Taxila and Mathura, Charaka advanced the art of medicine, and Nagarjuna and Ashvaghosha laid the bases of that *Mahayana* (Greater Vehicle) Buddhism which was to help Gautama to win China and Japan. Kanishka tolerated many religions, and experimented with various gods; finally he chose the new mythological Buddhism that had made Buddha into a deity and had filled the skies with *Bodhisattvas* and *Arhats*; he called a great council of

Buddhist theologians to formulate this creed for his realms, and became almost a second Ashoka in spreading the Buddhist faith. The Council composed 300,000 *sūtras*, lowered Buddha's philosophy to the emotional needs of the common soul, and raised him to divinity.

Meanwhile Chandragupta I (quite distinct, despite his name and number, from Chandragupta Maurya) had established in Magadha the Gupta Dynasty of native kings. His successor, Samudragupta, in a reign of fifty years, made himself one of the foremost monarchs in India's long history. He changed his capital from Pataliputra to Ayodhya, ancient home of the legendary Rama; sent his conquering armies and tax-gatherers into Bengal, Assam, Nepal, and southern India; and spent the treasure brought to him from vassal states in promoting literature, science, religion and the arts. He himself, in the interludes of war, achieved distinction as a poet and a musician. His son, Vikramaditya ("Sun of Power"), extended these conquests of arms and the mind, supported the great dramatist Kalidasa, and gathered a brilliant circle of poets, philosophers, artists, scientists and scholars about him in his capital at Ujjain. Under these two kings India reached a height of development unsurpassed since Buddha, and a political unity rivaled only under Ashoka and Akbar.

We discern some outline of Gupta civilization from the account that Fa-Hien gave of his visit to India at the opening of the fifth century of our era. He was one of many Buddhists who came from China to India during this Golden Age; and these pilgrims were probably less numerous than the merchants and ambassadors who, despite her mountain barriers, now entered pacified India from East and West, even from distant Rome, and brought to her a stimulating contact with foreign customs and ideas. Fa-Hien, after risking his life in passing through western China, found himself quite safe in India, traveling everywhere without encountering molestation or thievery.<sup>47</sup> His journal tells how he took six years in coming, spent six years in India, and needed three years more for his return *via* Ceylon and Java to his Chinese home.<sup>48</sup> He describes with admiration the wealth and prosperity, the virtue and happiness, of the Hindu people, and the social and religious liberty which they enjoyed. He was astonished at the number, size and population of the great cities, at the free hospitals and other charitable institutions which dotted the land,\* at the number of students in the universities and monasteries, and at the impos-

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\* These antedated by three centuries the first hospital built in Europe—*viz.*, the *Maison Dieu* erected in Paris in the seventh century A.D.<sup>49</sup>

ing scale and splendor of the imperial palaces." His description is quite Utopian, except for the matter of right hands:

The people are numerous and happy; they have not to register their households, or attend to any magistrates or their rules; only those who cultivate the royal land have to pay a portion of the gain from it. If they want to go they go; if they want to stay they stay. The king governs without decapitation or corporal punishments. Criminals are simply fined; . . . even in cases of repeated attempts at wicked rebellion they only have their right hands cut off. . . . Throughout the whole country the people do not kill any living creature, nor eat onions or garlic. The only exception is that of the Chandalas. . . . In that country they do not keep pigs and fowls, and do not sell live cattle; in the markets there are no butchers' shops, and no dealers in intoxicating drinks."

Fa-Hien hardly noted that the Brahmans, who had been in disfavor with the Mauryan dynasty since Ashoka, were growing again in wealth and power under the tolerant rule of the Gupta kings. They had revived the religious and literary traditions of pre-Buddhist days, and were developing Sanskrit into the Esperanto of scholars throughout India. It was under their influence and the patronage of the court that the great Hindu epics, the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana*, were written down into their present form.<sup>80</sup> Under this dynasty, too, Buddhist art reached its zenith in the frescoes of the Ajanta caves. In the judgment of a contemporary Hindu scholar, the "mere names of Kalidasa and Varahamihira, Gunavarman and Vashubandu, Aryabhata and Brahmagupta, are sufficient to mark this epoch as an apogee of Indian culture."<sup>81</sup> "An impartial historian," says Havell, "might well consider that the greatest triumph of British administration would be to restore to India all that she enjoyed in the fifth century A.D."<sup>82</sup>

This heyday of native culture was interrupted by a wave of those Hun invasions which now overran both Asia and Europe, ruining for a time India as well as Rome. While Attila was raiding Europe, Toramana was capturing Malwa, and the terrible Mihiragula was hurling the Gupta rulers from their throne. For a century India relapsed into bondage and chaos. Then a scion of the Gupta line, Harsha-Vardhana, recaptured northern India, built a capital at Kanauj, and for forty-two years gave peace and security to a wide realm, in which once more native arts and

letters flourished. We may conjecture the size, splendor and prosperity of Kanauj from the one unbelievable item that when the Moslems sacked it (1018 A.D.) they destroyed 10,000 temples.<sup>57</sup> Its fine public gardens and free bathing tanks were but a small part of the beneficence of the new dynasty. Harsha himself was one of those rare kings who make monarchy appear—for a time—the most admirable of all forms of government. He was a man of personal charm and accomplishments, writing poetry and dramas that are read in India to this day; but he did not allow these foibles to interfere with the competent administration of his kingdom. "He was indefatigable," says Yuan Chwang, "and the day was too short for him; he forgot sleep in his devotion to good works."<sup>58</sup> Having begun as a worshiper of Shiva he was later converted to Buddhism, and became another Ashoka in his pious benefactions. He forbade the eating of animal food, established travelers' rests throughout his domain, and erected thousands of topes, or Buddhist shrines, on the banks of the Ganges.

Yuan Chwang, most famous of the Chinese Buddhists who visited India, tells us that Harsha proclaimed, every five years, a great festival of charity, to which he invited all officials of all religions, and all the poor and needy of the realm. At this gathering it was his custom to give away in public alms all the surplus brought into the state treasury since the last quinquennial feast. Yuan was surprised to see a great quantity of gold, silver, coins, jewelry, fine fabrics and delicate brocades piled up in an open square, surrounded by a hundred pavilions each seating a thousand persons. Three days were given to religious exercises; on the fourth day (if we may believe the incredible pilgrim) the distribution began. Ten thousand Buddhist monks were fed, and each received a pearl, garments, flowers, perfumes, and one hundred pieces of gold. Then the Brahmans were given alms almost as abundant; then the Jains; then other sects; then all the poor and orphaned laity that had come from every quarter of the kingdom. Sometimes the distribution lasted three or four months. At the end Harsha divested himself of his costly robes and jewelry, and added them to the alms.<sup>59</sup>

The memoirs of Yuan Chwang reveal a certain theological exhilaration as the mental spirit of the age. It is a pleasant picture, and significant of India's repute in other lands—this Chinese aristocrat leaving his comforts and perquisites in far-off Ch'ang-an, passing across half-civilized western China, through Tashkent and Samarkand (then a flourishing city), over



the Himalayas into India, and then studying zealously, for three years, in the monastic university at Nalanda. His fame as a scholar and a man of rank brought him many invitations from the princes of India. When Harsha heard that Yuan was at the court of Kumara, King of Assam, he summoned Kumara to come with Yuan to Kanauj. Kumara refused, saying that Harsha could have his head, but not his guest. Harsha answered: "I trouble you for your head," and Kumara came. Harsha was fascinated by Yuan's learning and fine manners, and called a convocation of Buddhist notables to hear Yuan expound the Mahayana doctrine. Yuan nailed his theses to the gateway of the pavilion in which the discourse was to be held, and added a postscript in the manner of the day: "If any one here can find a single wrong argument and can refute it, I will let him cut off my head." The discussion lasted eighteen days, but Yuan (Yuan reports) answered all objections and confounded all heretics. (Another account has it that his opponents ended the conference by setting fire to the pavilion.)<sup>88</sup> After many adventures Yuan found his way back to Chang-an, where an enlightened emperor enshrined in a rich temple the Buddhist relics which this holy Polo had brought with him, and gave him a corps of scholars to help translate the manuscripts that he had purchased in India."

All the glory of Harsha's rule, however, was artificial and precarious, for it depended upon the ability and generosity of a mortal king. When he died a usurper seized the throne, and illustrated the nether side of monarchy. Chaos ensued, and continued for almost a thousand years. India, like Europe, now suffered her Middle Ages, was overrun by barbarians, was conquered, divided, and despoiled. Not until the great Akbar would she know peace and unity again.

#### IV. ANNALS OF RAJPUTANA

##### *The Samurai of India—The age of chivalry—The fall of Chitor*

This Dark Age was lighted up for a moment by the epic of Rajputana. Here, in the states of Mewar, Marwar, Amber, Bikaner and many others of melodious name, a people half native in origin and half descended from invading Scythians and Huns, had built a feudal civilization under the government of warlike rajas who cared more for the art of life than for the life of art. They began by acknowledging the suzerainty of the Mauryas and the Guptas; they ended by defending their independence,

and all India, from the inroads of Moslem hordes. Their clans were distinguished by a military ardor and courage not usually associated with India;\* if we may trust their admiring historian, Tod, every man of them was a dauntless Kshatriya, and every woman among them was a heroine. Their very name, *Rajputs*, meant "sons of kings"; and if sometimes they called their land *Rajasthan*, it was to designate it as "the home of royalty."

All the nonsense and glamor—all the bravery, loyalty, beauty, feuds, poisons, assassinations, wars, and subjection of woman—which our traditions attach to the Age of Chivalry can be found in the annals of these plucky states. "The Rajput chieftains," says Tod, "were imbued with all the kindred virtues of the western cavalier, and far his superior in mental attainments."<sup>60</sup> They had lovely women for whom they did not hesitate to die, and who thought it only a matter of courtesy to accompany their husbands to the grave by the rite of suttee. Some of these women were educated and refined; some of the rajas were poets or scientists; and for a while a delicate *genre* of water-color painting flourished among them in the medieval Persian style. For four centuries they grew in wealth, until they could spend \$20,000,000 on the coronation of Mewar's king.<sup>61</sup>

It was their pride and their tragedy that they enjoyed war as the highest art of all, the only one befitting a Rajput gentleman. This military spirit enabled them to defend themselves against the Moslems with historic valor,† but it kept their little states so divided and weakened with strife that not all their bravery could preserve them in the end. Tod's account of the fall of Chitor, one of the Rajput capitals, is as romantic as any legend of Arthur or Charlemagne; and indeed (since it is based solely upon native historians too faithful to their fatherland to be in love with truth) these marvelous *Annals of Rajasthan* may be as legendary as *Le Morte d'Arthur* or *Le Chanson de Roland*. In this version the Mohammedan invader, Alau-d-din, wanted not Chitor but the princess Pudmini—"a title bestowed only on the superlatively fair." The Moslem chieftain proposed to raise the siege if the regent of Chitor would surrender the princess. Being refused, Alau-d-din agreed to withdraw if he were allowed to see

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\* But cf. Arrian on ancient India: "In war the Indians were by far the bravest of all the races inhabiting Asia at that time."<sup>62</sup>

† "No place on earth," says Count Keyserling about Chitor, "has been the scene of equal heroism, knightliness, or an equally noble readiness to die."<sup>63</sup>

Pudmini. Finally he consented to depart if he might see Pudmini in a mirror; but this too was denied him. Instead, the women of Chitor joined in defending their city; and when the Rajputs saw their wives and daughters dying beside them they fought until every man of them was dead. When Alau-d-din entered the capital he found no sign of human life within its gates; all the males had died in battle, and their wives, in the awful rite known as the *Johur*, had burned themselves to death.<sup>62</sup>

## V. THE ZENITH OF THE SOUTH

### *The kingdoms of the Deccan—Vijayanagar—Krishna Raya— A medieval metropolis—Laws—Arts—Religion—Tragedy*

As the Moslems advanced into India native culture receded farther and farther south; and towards the end of these Middle Ages the finest achievements of Hindu civilization were those of the Deccan. For a time the Chalyuka tribe maintained an independent kingdom reaching across central India, and achieved, under Pulakeshin II, sufficient power and glory to defeat Harsha, to attract Yuan Chwang, and to receive a respectful embassy from Khosrou II of Persia. It was in Pulakeshin's reign and territory that the greatest of Indian paintings—the frescoes of Ajanta—were completed. Pulakeshin was overthrown by the king of the Pallavas, who for a brief period became the supreme power in central India. In the extreme south, and as early as the first century after Christ, the Pandyas established a realm comprising Madura, Tinnevely, and parts of Travancore; they made Madura one of the finest of medieval Hindu cities, and adorned it with a gigantic temple and a thousand lesser works of architectural art. In their turn they too were overthrown, first by the Cholas, and then by the Mohammedans. The Cholas ruled the region between Madura and Madras, and thence westward to Mysore. They were of great antiquity, being mentioned in the edicts of Ashoka; but we know nothing of them until the ninth century, when they began a long career of conquest that brought them tribute from all southern India, even from Ceylon. Then their power waned, and they passed under the control of the greatest of the southern states, Vijayanagar.\*

Vijayanagar—the name both of a kingdom and of its capital—is a melancholy instance of forgotten glory. In the years of its grandeur it com-

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\* In this medley of now almost forgotten kingdoms there were periods of literary and artistic—above all, architectural—creation; there were wealthy capitals, luxurious palaces, and mighty potentates; but so vast is India, and so long is its history, that in this congested paragraph we must pass by, without so much as mentioning them, men who for a

prised all the present native states of the lower peninsula, together with Mysore and the entire Presidency of Madras. We may judge of its power and resources by considering that King Krishna Raya led forth to battle at Talikota 703,000 foot, 32,600 horse, 551 elephants, and some hundred thousand merchants, prostitutes and other camp followers such as were then wont to accompany an army in its campaigns.<sup>83</sup> The autocracy of the king was softened by a measure of village autonomy, and by the occasional appearance of an enlightened and human monarch on the throne. Krishna Raya, who ruled Vijayanagar in the days of Henry VIII, compares favorably with that constant lover. He led a life of justice and courtesy, gave abounding alms, tolerated all Hindu faiths, enjoyed and supported literature and the arts, forgave fallen enemies and spared their cities, and devoted himself sedulously to the chores of administration. A Portuguese missionary, Domingos Paes (1522), describes him as

the most feared and perfect king that could possibly be; cheerful of disposition, and very merry; he is one that seeks to honor foreigners, and receives them kindly. . . . He is a great ruler, and a man of much justice, but subject to sudden fits of rage. . . . He is by rank a greater lord than any, by reason of what he possesses in armies and territories; but it seems that he has in fact nothing compared to what a man like him ought to have, so gallant and perfect is he in all things.<sup>84</sup>

The capital, founded in 1336, was probably the richest city that India had yet known. Nicolo Conti, visiting it about 1420, estimated its circumference at sixty miles; Paes pronounced it "as large as Rome, and very beautiful to the sight." There were, he added, "many groves of trees within it, and many conduits of water"; for its engineers had constructed a huge dam in the Tungabhadra River, and had formed a reservoir from which water was conveyed to the city by an aqueduct fifteen miles long, cut for several miles out of the solid rock. Abdu-r Razzak, who saw the city in 1443, reported it as "such that eye has not seen, nor ear heard, of any place resembling it upon the whole earth." Paes considered it "the

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time thought they dominated the earth. For example, Vikramaditya, who ruled the Chalyukans for half a century (1076-1126), was so successful in war that (like Nietzsche) he proposed to found a new chronological era, dividing all history into before him and after him. Today he is a footnote.

\* Among these modest possessions were twelve thousand wives.<sup>85</sup>

best-provided city in the world, . . . for in this one everything abounds." The houses, he tells us, numbered over a hundred thousand—implying a population of half a million souls. He marvels at a palace in which one room was built entirely of ivory; "it is so rich and beautiful that you would hardly find anywhere another such."<sup>96</sup> When Firoz Shah, Sultan of Delhi, married the daughter of Vijayanagar's king in the latter's capital, the road was spread for six miles with velvet, satin, cloth of gold and other costly stuffs.<sup>97</sup> However, every traveler is a liar.

Underneath this wealth a population of serfs and laborers lived in poverty and superstition, subject to a code of laws that preserved some commercial morality by a barbarous severity. Punishment ranged from mutilation of hands or feet to casting a man to the elephants, cutting off his head, impaling him alive by a stake thrust through his belly, or hanging him on a hook under his chin until he died,<sup>98</sup> rape as well as large-scale theft was punished in this last way. Prostitution was permitted, regulated, and turned into royal revenue. "Opposite the mint," says Abdu-r Razzak, "is the office of the prefect of the city, to which it is said twelve thousand policemen are attached; and their pay . . . is derived from the proceeds of the brothels. The splendor of these houses, the beauty of the heart-ravishers, their blandishments and ogles, are beyond all description."<sup>99</sup> Women were of subject status, and were expected to kill themselves on the death of their husbands, sometimes by allowing themselves to be buried alive.<sup>100</sup>

Under the Rayas or Kings of Vijayanagar literature prospered, both in classical Sanskrit and in the Telugu dialect of the south. Krishna Raya was himself a poet, as well as a liberal patron of letters; and his poet laureate, Alasani-Peddana, is ranked among the highest of India's singers. Painting and architecture flourished; enormous temples were built, and almost every foot of their surface was carved into statuary or bas-relief. Buddhism had lost its hold, and a form of Brahmanism that especially honored Vishnu had become the faith of the people. The cow was holy and was never killed; but many species of cattle and fowl were sacrificed to the gods, and eaten by the people. Religion was brutal, and manners were refined.

In one day all this power and luxury were destroyed. Slowly the conquering Moslems had made their way south; now the sultans of Bijapur, Ahmadnagar, Golkonda and Bidar united their forces to reduce this last stronghold of the native Hindu kings. Their combined armies

met Rama Raja's half-million men at Talikota; the superior numbers of the attackers prevailed; Rama Raja was captured and beheaded in the sight of his followers, and these, losing courage, fled. Nearly a hundred thousand of them were slain in the retreat, until all the streams were colored with their blood. The conquering troops plundered the wealthy capital, and found the booty so abundant "that every private man in the allied army became rich in gold, jewels, effects, tents, arms, horses and slaves."<sup>m</sup> For five months the plunder continued: the victors slaughtered the helpless inhabitants in indiscriminate butchery, emptied the stores and shops, smashed the temples and palaces, and labored at great pains to destroy all the statuary and painting in the city; then they went through the streets with flaming torches, and set fire to all that would burn. When at last they retired, Vijayanagar was as completely ruined as if an earthquake had visited it and had left not a stone upon a stone. It was a destruction ferocious and absolute, typifying that terrible Moslem conquest of India which had begun a thousand years before, and was now complete.

#### VI. THE MOSLEM CONQUEST

*The weakening of India—Mahmud of Ghazni—The Sultanate of Delhi—Its cultural asides—Its brutal policy—The lesson of Indian history*

The Mohammedan Conquest of India is probably the bloodiest story in history. It is a discouraging tale, for its evident moral is that civilization is a precarious thing, whose delicate complex of order and liberty, culture and peace may at any time be overthrown by barbarians invading from without or multiplying within. The Hindus had allowed their strength to be wasted in internal division and war; they had adopted religions like Buddhism and Jainism, which unnerved them for the tasks of life; they had failed to organize their forces for the protection of their frontiers and their capitals, their wealth and their freedom, from the hordes of Scythians, Huns, Afghans and Turks hovering about India's boundaries and waiting for national weakness to let them in. For four hundred years (600-1000 A.D.) India invited conquest; and at last it came.

The first Moslem attack was a passing raid upon Multan, in the western Punjab (664 A.D.) Similar raids occurred at the convenience of the invaders during the next three centuries, with the result that the Moslems

established themselves in the Indus valley about the same time that their Arab co-religionists in the West were fighting the battle of Tours (732 A.D.) for the mastery of Europe. But the real Moslem conquest of India did not come till the turn of the first millennium after Christ.

In the year 997 a Turkish chieftain by the name of Mahmud became sultan of the little state of Ghazni, in eastern Afghanistan. Mahmud knew that his throne was young and poor, and saw that India, across the border, was old and rich; the conclusion was obvious. Pretending a holy zeal for destroying Hindu idolatry, he swept across the frontier with a force inspired by a pious aspiration for booty. He met the unprepared Hindus at Bhimnagar, slaughtered them, pillaged their cities, destroyed their temples, and carried away the accumulated treasures of centuries. Returning to Ghazni he astonished the ambassadors of foreign powers by displaying "jewels and unbored pearls and rubies shining like sparks, or like wine congealed with ice, and emeralds like fresh sprigs of myrtle, and diamonds in size and weight like pomegranates."<sup>78</sup> Each winter Mahmud descended into India, filled his treasure chest with spoils, and amused his men with full freedom to pillage and kill; each spring he returned to his capital richer than before. At Mathura (on the Jumna) he took from the temple its statues of gold encrusted with precious stones, and emptied its coffers of a vast quantity of gold, silver and jewelry; he expressed his admiration for the architecture of the great shrine, judged that its duplication would cost one hundred million *dinars* and the labor of two hundred years, and then ordered it to be soaked with naphtha and burnt to the ground."<sup>79</sup> Six years later he sacked another opulent city of northern India, Somnath, killed all its fifty thousand inhabitants, and dragged its wealth to Ghazni. In the end he became, perhaps, the richest king that history has ever known. Sometimes he spared the population of the ravaged cities, and took them home to be sold as slaves; but so great was the number of such captives that after some years no one could be found to offer more than a few shillings for a slave. Before every important engagement Mahmud knelt in prayer, and asked the blessing of God upon his arms. He reigned for a third of a century; and when he died, full of years and honors, Moslem historians ranked him as the greatest monarch of his time, and one of the greatest sovereigns of any age."<sup>80</sup>

Seeing the canonization that success had brought to this magnificent thief, other Moslem rulers profited by his example, though none succeeded in bettering his instruction. In 1186 the Ghuri, a Turkish tribe of Afghan-

istan, invaded India, captured the city of Delhi, destroyed its temples, confiscated its wealth, and settled down in its palaces to establish the Sultanate of Delhi—an alien despotism fastened upon northern India for three centuries, and checked only by assassination and revolt. The first of these bloody sultans, Kutb-d Dīn Aibak, was a normal specimen of his kind—fanatical, ferocious and merciless. His gifts, as the Mohammedan historian tells us, “were bestowed by hundreds of thousands, and his slaughters likewise were by hundreds of thousands.” In one victory of this warrior (who had been purchased as a slave), “fifty thousand men came under the collar of slavery, and the plain became black as pitch with Hindus.”<sup>76</sup> Another sultan, Balban, punished rebels and brigands by casting them under the feet of elephants, or removing their skins, stuffing these with straw, and hanging them from the gates of Delhi. When some Mongol inhabitants who had settled in Delhi, and had been converted to Islam, attempted a rising, Sultan Alau-d-dīn (the conqueror of Chitor) had all the males—from fifteen to thirty thousand of them—slaughtered in one day. Sultan Muhammad bin Tughlak acquired the throne by murdering his father, became a great scholar and an elegant writer, dabbled in mathematics, physics and Greek philosophy, surpassed his predecessors in bloodshed and brutality, fed the flesh of a rebel nephew to the rebel’s wife and children, ruined the country with reckless inflation, and laid it waste with pillage and murder till the inhabitants fled to the jungle. He killed so many Hindus that, in the words of a Moslem historian, “there was constantly in front of his royal pavilion and his Civil Court a mound of dead bodies and a heap of corpses, while the sweepers and executioners were wearied out by their work of dragging” the victims “and putting them to death in crowds.”<sup>77</sup> In order to found a new capital at Daulatabad he drove every inhabitant from Delhi and left it a desert; and hearing that a blind man had stayed behind in Delhi, he ordered him to be dragged from the old to the new capital, so that only a leg remained of the wretch when his last journey was finished.<sup>78</sup> The Sultan complained that the people did not love him, or recognize his undeviating justice. He ruled India for a quarter of a century, and died in bed. His successor, Firoz Shah, invaded Bengal, offered a reward for every Hindu head, paid for 180,000 of them, raided Hindu villages for slaves, and died at the ripe age of eighty. Sultan Ahmad Shah feasted for three days whenever the number of defenseless Hindus slain in his territories in one day reached twenty thousand.<sup>79</sup>



These rulers were often men of ability, and their followers were gifted with fierce courage and industry; only so can we understand how they could have maintained their rule among a hostile people so overwhelmingly outnumbering them. All of them were armed with a religion militaristic in operation, but far superior in its stoical monotheism to any of the popular cults of India; they concealed its attractiveness by making the public exercise of the Hindu religions illegal, and thereby driving them more deeply into the Hindu soul. Some of these thirsty despots had culture as well as ability; they patronized the arts, and engaged artists and artisans—usually of Hindu origin—to build for them magnificent mosques and tombs; some of them were scholars, and delighted in converse with historians, poets and scientists. One of the greatest scholars of Asia, Alberuni, accompanied Mahmud of Ghazni to India, and wrote a scientific survey of India comparable to Pliny's *Natural History* and Humboldt's *Cosmos*. The Moslem historians were almost as numerous as the generals, and yielded nothing to them in the enjoyment of bloodshed and war. The Sultans drew from the people every rupee of tribute that could be exacted by the ancient art of taxation, as well as by straightforward robbery; but they stayed in India, spent their spoils in India, and thereby turned them back into India's economic life. Nevertheless, their terrorism and exploitation advanced that weakening of Hindu physique and morale which had been begun by an exhausting climate, an inadequate diet, political disunity, and pessimistic religions.

The usual policy of the Sultans was clearly sketched by Alau-d-din, who required his advisers to draw up "rules and regulations for grinding down the Hindus, and for depriving them of that wealth and property which fosters disaffection and rebellion."<sup>80</sup> Half of the gross produce of the soil was collected by the government; native rulers had taken one-sixth. "No Hindu," says a Moslem historian, "could hold up his head, and in their houses no sign of gold or silver . . . or of any superfluity was to be seen. . . . Blows, confinement in the stocks, imprisonment and chains, were all employed to enforce payment." When one of his own advisers protested against this policy, Alau-d-din answered: "Oh, Doctor, thou art a learned man, but thou hast no experience; I am an unlettered man, but I have a great deal. Be assured, then, that the Hindus will never become submissive and obedient till they are reduced to poverty. I have therefore given orders that just sufficient shall be left to them from year to year of corn, milk and curds, but that they shall not be allowed to accumulate hoards and property."<sup>81</sup>

This is the secret of the political history of modern India. Weakened by division, it succumbed to invaders; impoverished by invaders, it lost all power of resistance, and took refuge in supernatural consolations; it argued that both mastery and slavery were superficial delusions, and concluded that freedom of the body or the nation was hardly worth defending in so brief a life. The bitter lesson that may be drawn from this tragedy is that eternal vigilance is the price of civilization. A nation must love peace, but keep its powder dry.

#### VII. AKBAR THE GREAT

*Tamerlane—Babur—Humayun—Akbar—His government—His character—His patronage of the arts—His passion for philosophy—His friendship for Hinduism and Christianity—His new religion—The last days of Akbar*

It is in the nature of governments to degenerate; for power, as Shelley said, poisons every hand that touches it.<sup>81</sup> The excesses of the Delhi Sultans lost them the support not only of the Hindu population, but of their Moslem followers. When fresh invasions came from the north these Sultans were defeated with the same ease with which they themselves had won India.

Their first conqueror was Tamerlane himself—more properly Timur-i-lang—a Turk who had accepted Islam as an admirable weapon, and had given himself a pedigree going back to Genghis Khan, in order to win the support of his Mongol horde. Having attained the throne of Samarkand and feeling the need of more gold, it dawned upon him that India was still full of infidels. His generals, mindful of Moslem courage, demurred, pointing out that the infidels who could be reached from Samarkand were already under Mohammedan rule. *Mullahs* learned in the *Koran* decided the matter by quoting an inspiring verse: "Oh Prophet, make war upon infidels and unbelievers, and treat them with severity."<sup>82</sup> Thereupon Timur crossed the Indus (1398), massacred or enslaved such of the inhabitants as could not flee from him, defeated the forces of Sultan Mahmud Tughlak, occupied Delhi, slew a hundred thousand prisoners in cold blood, plundered the city of all the wealth that the Afghan dynasty had gathered there, and carried it off to Samarkand with a multitude of women and slaves, leaving anarchy, famine and pestilence in his wake.<sup>83</sup>

The Delhi Sultans remounted their throne, and taxed India for another century before the real conqueror came. Babur, founder of the great

Mogul\* Dynasty, was a man every whit as brave and fascinating as Alexander. Descended from both Timur and Genghis Khan, he inherited all the ability of these scourges of Asia without their brutality. He suffered from a surplus of energy in body and mind; he fought, hunted and traveled insatiably; it was nothing for him, single-handed, to kill five enemies in five minutes.<sup>77</sup> In two days he rode one hundred and sixty miles on horseback, and swam the Ganges twice in the bargain; and in his last years he remarked that not since the age of eleven had he kept the fast of Ramadan twice in the same place.<sup>78</sup>

"In the twelfth year of my age," he begins his *Memoirs*, "I became the ruler in the country of Farghana."<sup>79</sup> At fifteen he besieged and captured Samarkand; lost it again when he could not pay his troops; nearly died of illness; hid for a time in the mountains, and then recaptured the city with two hundred and forty men; lost it again through treachery; hid for two years in obscure poverty, and thought of retiring to a peasant life in China; organized another force, and, by the contagion of his own bravery, took Kabul in his twenty-second year; overwhelmed the one hundred thousand soldiers of Sultan Ibrahim at Panipat with twelve thousand men and some fine horses, killed prisoners by the thousands, captured Delhi, established there the greatest and most beneficent of the foreign dynasties that have ruled India, enjoyed four years of peace, composed excellent poems and memoirs, and died at the age of forty-seven after living, in action and experience, a century.

His son, Humayun, was too weak and vacillating, and too addicted to opium, to carry on Babur's work. Sher Shah, an Afghan chief, defeated him in two bloody battles, and restored for a time the Afghan power in India. Sher Shah, though capable of slaughter in the best Islamic style, rebuilt Delhi in fine architectural taste, and established governmental reforms that prepared for the enlightened rule of Akbar. Two minor Shahs held the power for a decade; then Humayun, after twelve years of hardship and wandering, organized a force in Persia, re-entered India, and recaptured the throne. Eight months later Humayun fell from the terrace of his library, and died.

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\* *Mogul* is another form of *Mongol*. The Moguls were really Turks; but the Hindus called—and still call—all northern Moslems (except the Afghans) Moguls.<sup>80</sup> "Babur" was a Mongol nickname, meaning lion; the real name of the first Mogul Emperor of India was Zahiru-d din Muhammad.<sup>81</sup>

During his exile and poverty his wife had borne him a son whom he had piously called Muhammad, but whom India was to call Akbar—that is, “Very Great.” No effort was spared to make him great; even his ancestry had taken every precaution, for in his veins ran the blood of Babur, Timur and Genghis Khan. Tutors were supplied him in abundance, but he rejected them, and refused to learn how to read. Instead he educated himself for kingship by incessant and dangerous sport; he became a perfect horseman, played polo royally, and knew the art of controlling the most ferocious elephants; he was always ready to set out on a lion or tiger hunt, to undergo any fatigue, and to face all dangers in the first person. Like a good Turk he had no effeminate distaste for human blood; when, at the age of fourteen, he was invited to win the title of *Ghazi*—Slayer of the Infidel—by killing a Hindu prisoner, he cut off the man’s head at once with one stroke of his scimitar. These were the barbarous beginnings of a man destined to become one of the wisest, most humane and most cultured of all the kings known to history.\*

At the age of eighteen he took over from the Regent the full direction of affairs. His dominion then extended over an eighth of India—a belt of territory some three hundred miles broad, running from the north-west frontier at Multan to Benares in the East. He set out with the zeal and voracity of his grandfather to extend these borders; and by a series of ruthless wars he made himself ruler of all Hindustan except for the little Rajput kingdom of Mewar. Returning to Delhi he put aside his armor, and devoted himself to re-organizing the administration of his realm. His power was absolute, and all important offices, even in distant provinces, were filled by his appointment. His principal aides were four: a Prime Minister or *Vakir*; a Finance Minister, called sometimes *Vazir* (Vizier), sometimes *Diwan*; a Master of the Court, or *Bakhshi*; and a Primate or *Sadr*, who was head of the Mohammedan religion in India. As his rule acquired tradition and prestige he depended less and less upon military power, and contented himself with a standing army of some twenty-five thousand men. In time of war this modest force was augmented with troops recruited by the provincial military governors—a precarious arrangement which had something to do with the fall of the

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\* Later he came to recognize the value of books, and—being still unable to read—listened for hours while others read to him, often from abstruse and difficult volumes. In the end he became an illiterate scholar, loving letters and art, and supporting them with royal largesse.

Mogul Empire under Aurangzeb.\* Bribery and embezzlement thrived among these governors and their subordinates, so that much of Akbar's time was spent in checking corruption. He regulated with strict economy the expenses of his court and household, fixing the prices of food and materials bought for them, and the wages of labor engaged by the state. When he died he left the equivalent of a billion dollars in the treasury, and his empire was the most powerful on earth.<sup>60</sup>

Both law and taxation were severe, but far less than before. From one-sixth to one-third of the gross produce of the soil was taken from the peasants, amounting to some \$100,000,000 a year in land tax. The Emperor was legislator, executive and judge; as supreme court he spent many hours in giving audience to important litigants. His law forbade child marriage and compulsory suttee, sanctioned the remarriage of widows, abolished the slavery of captives and the slaughter of animals for sacrifice, gave freedom to all religions, opened career to every talent of whatever creed or race, and removed the head-tax that the Afghan rulers had placed upon all Hindus unconverted to Islam.<sup>61</sup> At the beginning of his reign the law included such punishments as mutilation; at the end it was probably the most enlightened code of any sixteenth-century government. Every state begins with violence, and (if it becomes secure) mellows into liberty.

But the strength of a ruler is often the weakness of his government. The system depended so much upon Akbar's superior qualities of mind and character that obviously it would threaten to disintegrate at his death. He had, of course, most of the virtues, since he engaged most of the historians: he was the best athlete, the best horseman, the best swordsman, one of the greatest architects, and by all odds the handsomest man in the kingdom. Actually he had long arms, bow legs, narrow Mongoloid eyes, a head drooping leftward, and a wart on his nose.<sup>62</sup> He made himself presentable by neatness, dignity, serenity, and brilliant eyes that could sparkle (says a contemporary) "like the sea in sunshine," or flare up in a way to make the offender tremble with terror, like Vandamme before Napoleon. He dressed simply, in brocaded cap, blouse and trousers, jewels and bare feet. He cared little for meat, and gave it up almost entirely

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\* The army was supplied with the best ordnance yet seen in India, but inferior to that then in use in Europe. Akbar's efforts to secure better guns failed; and this inferiority in the instruments of slaughter cooperated with the degeneration of his descendants in determining the European conquest of India.

in his later years, saying that "it is not right that a man should make his stomach the grave of animals." Nevertheless he was strong in body and will, excelled in many active sports, and thought nothing of walking thirty-six miles in a day. He liked polo so much that he invented a luminous ball in order that the game might be played at night. He inherited the violent impulses of his family, and in his youth (like his Christian contemporaries) he was capable of solving problems by assassination. Gradually he learned, in Woodrow Wilson's phrase, to sit upon his own volcano; and he rose far above his time in that spirit of fair play which does not always distinguish Oriental rulers. "His clemency," says Firishta, "was without bounds; this virtue he often carried beyond the line of prudence."<sup>99</sup> He was generous, expending vast sums in alms; he was affable to all, but especially to the lowly; "their little offerings," says a Jesuit missionary, "he used to accept with such a pleased look, handling them and putting them in his bosom, as he did not do with the most lavish gifts of the nobles." One of his contemporaries described him as an epileptic; many said that melancholy possessed him to a morbid degree. Perhaps to put a brighter color on reality, he drank liquor and took opium, in moderation; his father and his children had similar habits, without similar self-control.\* He had a harem suitable to the size of his empire; one gossip tells us that "the King hath in Agra and Fathpur-Sikri, as they do credibly report, one thousand elephants, thirty horses, fourteen hundred tame deer, eight hundred concubines." But he does not seem to have had sensual ambitions or tastes. He married widely, but politically; he pleased the Rajput princes by espousing their daughters, and thereby bound them to the support of his throne; and from that time the Mogul Dynasty was half native in blood. A Rajput became his leading general, and a raja rose to be his greatest minister. His dream was a united India.<sup>100</sup>

His mind was not quite as realistic and coldly accurate as Cæsar's or Napoleon's; he had a passion for metaphysics, and might, if deposed, have become a mystic recluse. He thought constantly, and was forever making inventions and suggesting improvements.<sup>101</sup> Like Haroun-al-Rashid he took nocturnal rambles in disguise, and came back bursting with reforms. In the midst of his complex activity he made time to collect a great library, composed entirely of manuscripts beautifully written and

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\* Two of his children died in youth of chronic alcoholism.<sup>102</sup>

engraved by those skilful penmen whom he esteemed as artists fully equal to the painters and architects that adorned his reign. He despised print as a mechanical and impersonal thing, and soon disposed of the choice specimens of European typography presented to him by his Jesuit friends. The volumes in his library numbered only twenty-four thousand, but they were valued at \$3,500,000<sup>97</sup> by those who thought that such hoards of the spirit could be estimated in material terms. He patronized poets without stint, and loved one of them—the Hindu Birbal—so much that he made him a court favorite, and finally a general; whereupon Birbal made a mess of a campaign, and was slaughtered in no lyric flight.<sup>98</sup> Akbar had his literary aides render into Persian—which was the language of his court—the masterpieces of Hindu literature, history and science, and himself supervised the translation of the interminable *Mahabharata*.<sup>100</sup> Every art flourished under his patronage and stimulation. Hindu music and poetry had now one of their greatest periods; and painting, both Persian and Hindu, reached its second zenith through his encouragement.<sup>101</sup> At Agra he directed the building of the famous Fort, and within its walls erected (by proxy) five hundred buildings that his contemporaries considered to be among the most beautiful in the world. They were torn down by the impetuous Shah Jehan, and can be judged only by such remnants of Akbar's architecture as the tomb of Humayun at Delhi, and the remains at Fathpur-Sikri, where the mausoleum of Akbar's beloved friend, the ascetic Shaik Salim Chisti, is among the fairest structures in India.

Deeper than these interests was his *penchant* for speculation. This well-nigh omnipotent emperor secretly yearned to be a philosopher—much as philosophers long to be emperors, and cannot comprehend the stupidity of Providence in withholding from them their rightful thrones. After conquering the world, Akbar was unhappy because he could not understand it. "Although," he said, "I am the master of so vast a kingdom, and all the appliances of government are at my hand, yet since true greatness consists in doing the will of God, my mind is not at ease in this diversity of sects and creeds; and apart from this outward pomp of circumstance, with what satisfaction, in this despondency, can I undertake the sway of empire? I await the coming of some discreet man of principle

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\* The Moslems hated Birbal, and rejoiced at his death. One of them, the historian Badaoni, recorded the incident with savage pleasure: "Birbal, who had fled from fear of his life, was slain, and entered the row of the dogs in Hell."<sup>98</sup>

who will resolve the difficulties of my conscience. . . . Discourses in philosophy have such a charm for me that they distract me from all else, and I forcibly restrain myself from listening to them lest the necessary duties of the hour should be neglected."<sup>101</sup> "Crowds of learned men from all nations," says Badaoni, "and sages of various religions and sects, came to the court and were honored with private conversations. After inquiries and investigations, which were their only business and occupation day and night, they would talk about profound points of science, the subtleties of revelation, the curiosities of history, and the wonders of nature."<sup>101</sup> "The superiority of man," said Akbar, "rests on the jewel of reason."<sup>101</sup>

As became a philosopher, he was profoundly interested in religion. His careful reading of the *Mahabharata*, and his intimacy with Hindu poets and sages, lured him into the study of Indian faiths. For a time, at least, he accepted the theory of transmigration, and scandalized his Moslem followers by appearing in public with Hindu religious marks on his forehead. He had a flair for humoring all the creeds: he pleased the Zoroastrians by wearing their sacred shirt and girdle under his clothes, and allowed the Jains to persuade him to abandon hunting, and to prohibit, on certain days, the killing of animals. When he learned of the new religion called Christianity, which had come into India with the Portuguese occupation of Goa, he despatched a message to the Paulist missionaries there, inviting them to send two of their learned men to him. Later some Jesuits came to Delhi and so interested him in Christ that he ordered his scribes to translate the New Testament.<sup>102</sup> He gave the Jesuits full freedom to make converts, and allowed them to bring up one of his sons. While Catholics were murdering Protestants in France, and Protestants, under Elizabeth, were murdering Catholics in England, and the Inquisition was killing and robbing Jews in Spain, and Bruno was being burned at the stake in Italy, Akbar invited the representatives of all the religions in his empire to a conference, pledged them to peace, issued edicts of toleration for every cult and creed, and, as evidence of his own neutrality, married wives from the Brahman, Buddhist, and Mohammedan faiths.

His greatest pleasure, after the fires of youth had cooled, was in the free discussion of religious beliefs. He had quite discarded the dogmas of Islam, and to such an extent that his Moslem subjects fretted under his impartial rule. "This king," St. Francis Xavier reported with some exaggeration, "has destroyed the false sect of Mohammed, and wholly discredited it. In this city there is neither a mosque nor a *Koran*—the book



of their law; and the mosques that were there have been made stables for horses, and storehouses." The King took no stock in revelations, and would accept nothing that could not justify itself with science and philosophy. It was not unusual for him to gather friends and prelates of various sects together, and discuss religion with them from Thursday evening to Friday noon. When the Moslem *mullahs* and the Christian priests quarreled he reproved them both, saying that God should be worshiped through the intellect, and not by a blind adherence to supposed revelations. "Each person," he said, in the spirit—and perhaps through the influence—of the *Upanishads* and Kabir, "according to his condition gives the Supreme Being a name; but in reality to name the Unknowable is vain." Certain Moslems suggested an ordeal by fire as a test of Christianity *vs.* Islam: a *mullah* holding the *Koran* and a priest holding one of the Gospels were to enter a fire, and he who should come out unhurt would be adjudged the teacher of truth. Akbar, who did not like the *mullah* who was proposed for this experiment, warmly seconded the suggestion, but the Jesuit rejected it as blasphemous and impious, not to say dangerous. Gradually the rival groups of theologians shunned these conferences, and left them to Akbar and his rationalist intimates.<sup>300</sup>

Harassed by the religious divisions in his kingdom, and disturbed by the thought that they might disrupt it after his death, Akbar finally decided to promulgate a new religion, containing in simple form the essentials of the warring faiths. The Jesuit missionary Bartoli records the matter thus:

He summoned a General Council, and invited to it all the masters of learning and the military commandants of the cities round about, excluding only Father Ridolfo, whom it was vain to expect to be other than hostile to his sacrilegious purpose. When he had them all assembled in front of him, he spoke in a spirit of astute and knavish policy, saying:

"For an empire ruled by one head it was a bad thing to have the members divided among themselves and at variance one with the other; . . . whence it came about that there are as many factions as religions. We ought, therefore, to bring them all into one, but in such fashion that they should be both 'one' and 'all'; with the great advantage of not losing what is good in any one religion, while gaining whatever is better in another. In that way honor would be rendered to God, peace would be given to the people, and security to the empire."<sup>301</sup>

The Council perforce consenting, he issued a decree proclaiming himself the infallible head of the church; this was the chief contribution of Christianity to the new religion. The creed was a pantheistic monotheism in the best Hindu tradition, with a spark of sun and fire worship from the Zoroastrians, and a semi-Jain recommendation to abstain from meat. The slaughter of cows was made a capital offense: nothing could have pleased the Hindus more, or the Moslems less. A later edict made vegetarianism compulsory on the entire population for at least a hundred days in the year; and in further consideration of native ideas, garlic and onions were prohibited. The building of mosques, the fast of Ramadan, the pilgrimage to Mecca, and other Mohammedan customs were banned. Many Moslems who resisted the edicts were exiled.<sup>108</sup> In the center of the Peace Court at Fathpur-Sikri a Temple of United Religion was built (and still stands there) as a symbol of the Emperor's fond hope that now all the inhabitants of India might be brothers, worshiping the same God.

As a religion the *Din Ilahi* never succeeded; Akbar found tradition too strong for his infallibility. A few thousand rallied to the new cult, largely as a means of securing official favor; the vast majority adhered to their inherited gods. Politically the stroke had some beneficent results. The abolition of the head-tax and the pilgrim-tax on the Hindus, the freedom granted to all religions,\* the weakening of racial and religious fanaticism, dogmatism and division, far outweighed the egotism and excesses of Akbar's novel revelation. And it won him such loyalty from even the Hindus who did not accept his creed that his prime purpose—political unity—was largely achieved.

With his own fellow Moslems, however, the *Din Ilahi* was a source of bitter resentment, leading at one time to open revolt, and stirring Prince Jehangir into treacherous machinations against his father. The Prince complained that Akbar had reigned forty years, and had so strong a constitution that there was no prospect of his early death. Jehangir organized an army of thirty thousand horsemen, killed Abu-l Fazl, the King's court historian and dearest friend, and proclaimed himself emperor. Akbar persuaded the youth to submit, and forgave him after a day; but the disloyalty of his son, added to the death of his mother and his friend, broke his spirit, and left him an easy prey for the Great Enemy. In his last days his children ignored him, and gave their energies to quarreling for his throne. Only a few intimates were with him when he died—presumably

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\* With the exception of the transient persecution of Islam (1582-5).

of dysentery, perhaps of poisoning by Jehangir. *Mullahs* came to his deathbed to reconvert him to Islam, but they failed; the King "passed away without the benefit of the prayers of any church or sect."<sup>100</sup> No crowd followed his simple funeral; and the sons and courtiers who had worn mourning for the event discarded it the same evening, and rejoiced that they had inherited his kingdom. It was a bitter death for the justest and wisest ruler that Asia has ever known.

#### VIII. THE DECLINE OF THE MOGULS

*The children of great men—Jehangir—Shah Jehan—His magnificence—His fall—Aurangzeb—His fanaticism—His death—  
The coming of the British*

The children who had waited so impatiently for his death found it difficult to hold together the empire that had been created by his genius. Why is it that great men so often have mediocrities for their offspring? Is it because the gamble of the genes that produced them—the comingling of ancestral traits and biological possibilities—was but a chance, and could not be expected to recur? Or is it because the genius exhausts in thought and toil the force that might have gone to parentage, and leaves only his diluted blood to his heirs? Or is it that children decay under ease, and early good fortune deprives them of the stimulus to ambition and growth?

Jehangir was not so much a mediocrity as an able degenerate. Born of a Turkish father and a Hindu princess, he enjoyed all the opportunities of an heir apparent, indulged himself in alcohol and lechery, and gave full vent to that sadistic joy in cruelty which had been a recessive character in Babur, Humayun and Akbar, but had always lurked in the Tatar blood. He took delight in seeing men flayed alive, impaled, or torn to pieces by elephants. In his *Memoirs* he tells how, because their careless entrance upon the scene startled his quarry in a hunt, he had a groom killed, and the groom's servants hamstrung—i.e., crippled for life by severing the tendons behind the knees; having attended to this, he says, "I continued hunting."<sup>101</sup> When his son Khusrü conspired against him he had seven hundred supporters of the rebel impaled in a line along the streets of Lahore; and he remarks with pleasure on the length of time it took these men to die.<sup>102</sup> His sexual life was attended to by a harem of six thousand women,<sup>103</sup> and graced by his later attachment to his favorite

wife, Nur Jehan<sup>\*</sup>—whom he acquired by murdering her husband. His administration of justice was impartial as well as severe, but the extravagance of his expenditures laid a heavy burden upon a nation which had become the most prosperous on the globe through the wise leadership of Akbar and many years of peace.

Toward the end of his reign Jehangir took more and more to his cups, and neglected the tasks of government. Inevitably conspiracies arose to replace him; already in 1622 his son Jehan had tried to seize the throne. When Jehangir died Jehan hurried up from the Deccan where he had been hiding, proclaimed himself emperor, and murdered all his brothers to ensure his peace of mind. His father passed on to him his habits of extravagance, intemperance and cruelty. The expenses of Jehan's court, and the high salaries of his innumerable officials, absorbed more and more of the revenue produced by the thriving industry and commerce of the people. The religious tolerance of Akbar and the indifference of Jehangir were replaced by a return to the Moslem faith, the persecution of Christians, and the ruthless and wholesale destruction of Hindu shrines.

Shah Jehan redeemed himself in some measure by his generosity to his friends and the poor, his artistic taste and passion in adorning India with the fairest architecture that it had ever seen, and his devotion to his wife Mumtaz Mahal—"Ornament of the Palace." He had married her in his twenty-first year, when he had already had two children by an earlier consort. Mumtaz gave her tireless husband fourteen children in eighteen years, and died, at the age of thirty-nine, in bringing forth the last. Shah Jehan built the immaculate Taj Mahal as a monument to her memory and her fertility, and relapsed into a scandalous licentiousness.<sup>123</sup> The most beautiful of all the world's tombs was but one of a hundred masterpieces that Jehan erected, chiefly at Agra and in that new Delhi which grew up under his planning. The costliness of these palaces, the luxuriousness of the court, the extravagant jewelry of the Peacock Throne,<sup>†</sup> would

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<sup>\*</sup> I.e., "Light of the World"; also called Nur Mahal—"Light of the Palace." *Jehangir* means "Conqueror of the World"; *Shah Jehan*, of course, was "King of the World."

<sup>†</sup> This throne, which required seven years for its completion, consisted entirely of jewels, precious metals and stones. Four legs of gold supported the seat; twelve pillars made of emeralds held up the enameled canopy; each pillar bore two peacocks encrusted with gems; and between each pair of peacocks rose a tree covered with diamonds, emeralds, rubies and pearls. The total cost was over \$7,000,000. The throne was captured and carried off to Persia by Nadir Shah (1739), and was gradually dismembered to defray the expenses of Persian royalty.<sup>124</sup>

suggest a rate of taxation ruinous to India. Nevertheless, though one of the worst famines in India's history occurred in Shah Jehan's reign, his thirty years of government marked the zenith of India's prosperity and prestige. The lordly Shah was a capable ruler, and though he wasted many lives in foreign war he gave his own land a full generation of peace. As a great British administrator of Bombay, Mountstuart Elphinstone, wrote,

those who look on India in its present state may be inclined to suspect the native writers of exaggerating its former prosperity; but the deserted citics, ruined palaces and choked-up aqueducts which we still see, with the great reservoirs and embankments in the midst of jungles, and the decayed causeways, wells and caravanserais of the royal roads, concur with the evidence of contemporary travelers in convincing us that those historians had good grounds for their commendation.<sup>135</sup>

Jehan had begun his reign by killing his brothers; but he had neglected to kill his sons, one of whom was destined to overthrow him. In 1657 the ablest of these, Aurangzeb, led an insurrection from the Deccan. The Shah, like David, gave instructions to his generals to defeat the rebel army, but to spare, if possible, the life of his son. Aurangzeb overcame all the forces sent against him, captured his father, and imprisoned him in the Fort of Agra. For nine bitter years the deposed king lingered there, never visited by his son, attended only by his faithful daughter Jahanara, and spending his days looking from the Jasmine Tower of his prison across the Jumna to where his once-beloved Mumtaz lay in her jeweled tomb.

The son who so ruthlessly deposed him was one of the greatest saints in the history of Islam, and perhaps the most nearly unique of the Mogul emperors. The *mullahs* who had educated him had so imbued him with religion that at one time the young prince had thought of renouncing the empire and the world, and becoming a religious recluse. Throughout his life, despite his despotism, his subtle diplomacy, and a conception of morals as applying only to his own sect, he remained a pious Moslem, reading prayers at great length, memorizing the entire *Koran*, and warring against infidelity. He spent hours in devotion, and days in fasts. For the most part he practised his religion as earnestly as he professed it. It is true that in politics he was cold and calculating, capable of lying cleverly for his country and his god. But he was the least cruel of the Moguls, and

the mildest; slaughter abated in his reign, and he made hardly any use of punishment in dealing with crime. He was consistently humble in deportment, patient under provocation, and resigned in misfortune. He abstained scrupulously from all food, drink or luxury forbidden by his faith; though skilled in music, he abandoned it as a sensual pleasure; and apparently he carried out his resolve to spend nothing upon himself save what he had been able to earn by the labor of his hands.<sup>138</sup> He was a St. Augustine on the throne.

Shah Jehan had given half his revenues to the promotion of architecture and the other arts; Aurangzeb cared nothing for art, destroyed its "heathen" monuments with coarse bigotry, and fought, through a reign of half a century, to eradicate from India almost all religions but his own. He issued orders to the provincial governors, and to his other subordinates, to raze to the ground all the temples of either Hindus or Christians, to smash every idol, and to close every Hindu school. In one year (1679-80) sixty-six temples were broken to pieces in Amber alone, sixty-three at Chitor, one hundred and twenty-three at Udaipur;<sup>139</sup> and over the site of a Benares temple especially sacred to the Hindus he built, in deliberate insult, a Mohammedan mosque.<sup>140</sup> He forbade all public worship of the Hindu faiths, and laid upon every unconverted Hindu a heavy capitation tax.<sup>141</sup> As a result of his fanaticism, thousands of the temples which had represented or housed the art of India through a millennium were laid in ruins. We can never know, from looking at India today, what grandeur and beauty she once possessed.

Aurangzeb converted a handful of timid Hindus to Islam, but he wrecked his dynasty and his country. A few Moslems worshiped him as a saint, but the mute and terrorized millions of India looked upon him as a monster, fled from his tax-gatherers, and prayed for his death. During his reign the Mogul empire in India reached its height, extending into the Deccan; but it was a power that had no foundation in the affection of the people, and was doomed to fall at the first hostile and vigorous touch. The Emperor himself, in his last years, began to realize that by the very narrowness of his piety he had destroyed the heritage of his fathers. His deathbed letters are pitiful documents.

I know not who I am, where I shall go, or what will happen to this sinner full of sins. . . . My years have gone by profitless. God has been in my heart, yet my darkened eyes have not recognized his

light. . . . There is no hope for me in the future. The fever is gone, but only the skin is left. . . . I have greatly sinned, and know not what torments await me. . . . May the peace of God be upon you.<sup>120</sup>

He left instructions that his funeral should be ascetically simple, and that no money should be spent on his shroud except the four rupees that he had made by sewing caps. The top of his coffin was to be covered with a plain piece of canvas. To the poor he left three hundred rupees earned by copying the *Koran*.<sup>121</sup> He died at the age of eighty-nine, having long outstayed his welcome on the earth.

Within seventeen years of his death his empire was broken into fragments. The support of the people, so wisely won by Akbar, had been forfeited by the cruelty of Jehangir, the wastefulness of Jehan, and the intolerance of Aurangzeb. The Moslem minority, already enervated by India's heat, had lost the military ardor and physical vigor of their prime, and no fresh recruits were coming from the north to buttress their declining power. Meanwhile, far away in the west, a little island had sent its traders to cull the riches of India. Soon it would send its guns, and take over this immense empire in which Hindu and Moslem had joined to build one of the great civilizations of history.

# The Life of the People\*

## I. THE MAKERS OF WEALTH

*The jungle background — Agriculture — Mining — Handicrafts —  
Commerce—Money—Taxes—Famines—Poverty and wealth*

THE soil of India had not lent itself willingly to civilization. A great part of it was jungle, the jealously guarded home of lions, tigers, elephants, serpents, and other individualists with a Rousseauian contempt for civilization. The biological struggle to free the land from these enemies had continued underneath all the surface dramas of economic and political strife. Akbar shot tigers near Mathura, and captured wild elephants in many places where none can be found today. In Vedic times the lion might be met with anywhere in northwest or central India; now it is almost extinct throughout the peninsula. The serpent and the insect, however, still carry on the war: in 1926 some two thousand Hindus were killed by wild animals (875 by marauding tigers); but twenty thousand Hindus met death from the fangs of snakes.<sup>1</sup>

Gradually, as the soil was redeemed from the beast, it was turned to the cultivation of rice, pulse, millet, vegetables and fruits. Through the greater part of Indian history the majority of the population have lived abstemiously on these natural foods, reserving flesh, fish and fowl for the Outcastes and the rich.<sup>†</sup> To render their diet more exciting, and perhaps to assist Aphrodite,<sup>\*</sup> the Hindus have grown and consumed an unusual abundance of curry, ginger, cloves, cinnamon and other spices. Europeans valued these spices so highly that they stumbled upon a hemisphere in search for them; who knows but that America was discovered for the sake of love? In Vedic times the land belonged to the people,<sup>\*</sup> but from the days of Chandragupta Maurya it became the habit of the kings to claim royal owner-

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\* The following analysis will apply for the most part to post-Vedic and pre-British India. The reader should remember that India is now in flux, and that institutions, morals and manners once characteristic of her may be disappearing today.

† Vijayanagar was an exception; its people ate fowl and flesh (barring oxen and cows), as well as lizards, rats and cats.<sup>4</sup>



ship of all the soil, and to let it out to the tiller for an annual rental and tax.<sup>6</sup> Irrigation was usually a governmental undertaking. One of the dams raised by Chandragupta functioned till 150 A.D.; remains of the ancient canals can be seen everywhere today; and signs still survive of the artificial lake that Raj Sing, Rajput Rana of Mewar, built as an irrigation reservoir (1661), and which he surrounded with a marble wall twelve miles in length.<sup>7</sup>

The Hindus seem to have been the first people to mine gold.<sup>8</sup> Herodotus<sup>9</sup> and Megasthenes<sup>10</sup> tell of the great "gold-digging ants, in size somewhat less than dogs, but bigger than foxes," which helped the miners to find the metal by turning it up in their scratching of the sand.\* Much of the gold used in the Persian Empire in the fifth century before Christ came from India. Silver, copper, lead, tin, zinc and iron were also mined—iron as early as 1500 B.C.<sup>11</sup> The art of tempering and casting iron developed in India long before its known appearance in Europe; Vikramaditya, for example, erected at Delhi (ca. 380 A.D.) an iron pillar that stands untarnished today after fifteen centuries; and the quality of metal, or manner of treatment, which has preserved it from rust or decay is still a mystery to modern metallurgical science.<sup>12</sup> Before the European invasion the smelting of iron in small charcoal furnaces was one of the major industries of India.<sup>13</sup> The Industrial Revolution taught Europe how to carry out these processes more cheaply on a larger scale, and the Indian industry died under the competition. Only in our own time are the rich mineral resources of India being again exploited and explored.<sup>14</sup>

The growing of cotton appears earlier in India than elsewhere; apparently it was used for cloth in Mohenjo-daro.<sup>15</sup> In our oldest classical reference to cotton Herodotus says, with pleasing ignorance: "Certain wild trees there bear *wool* instead of fruit, which in beauty and quality excels that of sheep; and the Indians make their clothing from these trees."<sup>16</sup> It was their wars in the Near East that acquainted the Romans with this tree-grown "wool."<sup>17</sup> Arabian travelers in ninth-century India reported that "in this country they make garments of such extraordinary perfection that nowhere else is their like to be seen—sewed and woven to such a degree of fineness, they may be drawn through a ring of moderate size."<sup>18</sup> The medieval Arabs took over the art from India, and their word *quttan* gave us our word *cotton*.<sup>19</sup> The name *muslin* was originally applied to fine cotton weaves made in Mosul from Indian models; *calico* was so called because it came (first in 1631) from Calicut, on the southwestern shores of India. "Embroidery," says Marco Polo, speaking of Gujarat in 1293 A.D., "is here performed with more

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\* We do not know what these "ants" were; they were more probably anteaters than ants.



FIG. 42—*Mogul painting of Darbar of Akbar at Akbarabad, Ca. 1620*  
Boston Museum of Fine Arts



FIG. 43—*Torso of a youth, from Sanchi*  
Victoria and Albert Museum, London



FIG. 44—*Seated statue of  
Brahma, 10th century*  
Metropolitan Museum of Art



FIG. 46—*The Naga-King.*  
*Facade relief on Ajanta*  
*Cave-temple XIX*  
Courtesy of  
A. K. Coomaraswamy



FIG. 45—*The Buddha of  
Sarnath, 5th century*  
Photo by A. K. Coomaraswamy



FIG. 47—*The Dancing Shiva. South India, 17th century*  
Minneapolis Institute of Arts

delicacy than in any other part of the world."<sup>20</sup> The shawls of Kashmir and the rugs of India bear witness even today to the excellence of Indian weaving in texture and design.\* But weaving was only one of the many handicrafts of India, and the weavers were only one of the many craft and merchant guilds that organized and regulated the industry of India. Europe looked upon the Hindus as experts in almost every line of *manufacture*—wood-work, ivory-work, metal-work, bleaching, dyeing, tanning, soap-making, glass-blowing, gunpowder, fireworks, cement, etc.<sup>21</sup> China imported eyeglasses from India in 1260 A.D. Bernier, traveling in India in the seventeenth century, described it as humming with industry. Fitch, in 1585, saw a fleet of one hundred and eighty boats carrying a great variety of goods down the river Jumna.

Internal trade flourished; every roadside was—and is—a bazaar. The foreign trade of India is as old as her history;<sup>22</sup> objects found in Sumeria and Egypt indicate a traffic between these countries and India as far back as 3000 B.C.<sup>23</sup> Commerce between India and Babylon by the Persian Gulf flourished from 700 to 480 B.C.; and perhaps the "ivory, apes and peacocks" of Solomon came by the same route from the same source. India's ships sailed the sea to Burma and China in Chandragupta's days; and Greek merchants, called *Yavana* (Ionians) by the Hindus, thronged the markets of Dravidian India in the centuries before and after the birth of Christ.<sup>24</sup> Rome, in her epicurean days, depended upon India for spices, perfumes and unguents, and paid great prices for Indian silks, brocades, muslins and cloth of gold; Pliny condemned the extravagance which sent \$5,000,000 yearly from Rome to India for such luxuries. Indian cheetahs, tigers and elephants assisted in the gladiatorial games and sacrificial rites of the Colosseum.<sup>25</sup> The Parthian wars were fought by Rome largely to keep open the trade route to India. In the seventh century the Arabs captured Persia and Egypt, and thereafter trade between Europe and Asia passed through Moslem hands; hence the Crusades, and Columbus. Under the Moguls foreign commerce rose again; the wealth of Venice, Genoa and other Italian cities grew through their service as ports for European trade with India and the East; the Renaissance owed more to the wealth derived from this trade than to the manuscripts brought to Italy by the Greeks. Akbar had an admiralty which supervised the building of ships and the regulation of ocean traffic; the ports of Bengal and Sindh were famous for shipbuilding, and did their work so well that the Sultan of Constantinople found it cheaper to have his vessels built there than in Alexandria; even the East India Company had many of its ships built in Bengal docks.<sup>26</sup>

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\* Cf. the red rug, from seventeenth-century India, presented to the Metropolitan Museum of Art (Room D 3) by Mr. J. P. Morgan.

The development of coinage to facilitate this trade took many centuries. In Buddha's days rough rectangular coins were issued by various economic and political authorities; but it was not until the fourth century before Christ that India, under the influence of Persia and Greece, arrived at a coinage guaranteed by the state.<sup>77</sup> Sher Shah issued well-designed pieces of copper, silver and gold, and established the rupee as the basic coin of the realm.<sup>78</sup> Under Akbar and Jehangir the coinage of India was superior, in artistic execution and purity of metal, to that of any modern European state.<sup>79</sup> As in medieval Europe, so in medieval India the growth of industry and commerce was impeded by a religious antipathy to the taking of interest. "The Indians," says Megasthenes, "neither put out money at usury" (interest), "nor know how to borrow. It is contrary to established usage for an Indian either to do or to suffer wrong; and therefore they neither make contracts nor require securities."<sup>80</sup> When the Hindu could not invest his savings in his own economic enterprises he preferred to hide them, or to buy jewelry as conveniently hoardable wealth.<sup>81</sup> Perhaps this failure to develop a facile credit system aided the Industrial Revolution to establish the European domination of Asia. Slowly, however, despite the hostility of the Brahmins, money-lending grew. The rates varied, according to the caste of the borrower, from twelve to sixty per cent, usually ranging about twenty.<sup>82</sup> Bankruptcy was not permitted as a liquidation of debts; if a debtor died insolvent his descendants to the sixth generation continued to be responsible for his obligations.<sup>83</sup>

Both agriculture and trade were heavily taxed to support the government. The peasant had to surrender from one-sixth to one-half of his crop; and, as in medieval and contemporary Europe, many tolls were laid upon the flow and exchange of goods.<sup>84</sup> Akbar raised the land-tax to one-third, but abolished all other exactions.<sup>85</sup> The land-tax was a bitter levy, but it had the saving grace of rising with prosperity and falling with depression; and in famine years the poor could at least die untaxed. For famines occurred, even in Akbar's palmy days (1595-8); that of 1556 seems to have led to cannibalism and widespread desolation. Roads were bad, transportation was slow, and the surplus of one region could with difficulty be used to supply the dearth of another.

As everywhere, there were extremes of poverty and wealth, but hardly so great as in India or America today. At the bottom was a small minority of slaves; above them the Shudras were not so much slaves as hired men, though their status, like that of almost all Hindus, was hereditary. The poverty described by Père Dubois (1820)<sup>86</sup> was the result of fifty years of political chaos; under the Moguls the condition of the people had been rela-

tively prosperous." Wages were modest, ranging for manual workers from three to nine cents a day in Akbar's reign; but prices were correspondingly low. In 1600 a rupee (normally 32.5 cents) bought 194 pounds of wheat, or 278 pounds of barley; in 1901 it bought only 29 pounds of wheat, or 44 pounds of barley.<sup>8</sup> An Englishman resident in India in 1616 described "the plenty of all provisions" as "very great throughout the whole monarchy," and added that "every one there may eat bread without scarceness."<sup>9</sup> Another Englishman, touring India in the seventeenth century, found that his expenses averaged four cents a day.<sup>10</sup>

The wealth of the country reached its two peaks under Chandragupta Maurya and Shah Jehan. The riches of India under the Gupta kings became a proverb throughout the world. Yuan Chwang pictured an Indian city as beautified with gardens and pools, and adorned with institutes of letters and arts; "the inhabitants were well off, and there were families with great wealth; fruit and flowers were abundant. . . . The people had a refined appearance, and dressed in glossy silk attire; they were . . . clear and suggestive in discourse; they were equally divided between orthodoxy and heterodoxy."<sup>11</sup> "The Hindu kingdoms overthrown by the Moslems," says Elphinstone, "were so wealthy that the historians tire of telling of the immense loot of jewels and coin captured by the invaders."<sup>12</sup> Nicolo Conti described the banks of the Ganges (ca. 1420) as lined with one prosperous city after another, each well designed, rich in gardens and orchards, silver and gold, commerce and industry.<sup>13</sup> Shah Jehan's treasury was so full that he kept two underground strong rooms, each of some 150,000 cubic feet capacity, almost filled with silver and gold.<sup>14</sup> "Contemporary testimonies," says Vincent Smith, "permit of no doubt that the urban population of the more important cities was well to do."<sup>15</sup> Travelers described Agra and Fathpur-Sikri as each greater and richer than London.<sup>16</sup> Anquetil-Duperron, journeying through the Mahratta districts in 1760, found himself "in the midst of the simplicity and happiness of the Golden Age. . . . The people were cheerful, vigorous, and in high health."<sup>17</sup> Clive, visiting Murshidabad in 1759, reckoned that ancient capital of Bengal as equal in extent, population and wealth to the London of his time, with palaces far greater than those of Europe, and men richer than any individual in London.<sup>18</sup> India, said Clive, was "a country of inexhaustible riches."<sup>19</sup> Tried by Parliament for helping him-



self too readily to this wealth, Clive excused himself ingeniously: he described the riches that he had found about him in India—opulent cities ready to offer him any bribe to escape indiscriminate plunder, bankers throwing open to his grasp vaults piled high with jewels and gold; and he concluded: “At this moment I stand astonished at my own moderation.”<sup>10</sup>

## II. THE ORGANIZATION OF SOCIETY

*The monarchy—Law—The Code of “Manu”—Development of the caste system—Rise of the Brahmins—Their privileges and powers—Their obligations—In defense of caste*

Because the roads were poor and communication difficult, it was easier to conquer than to rule India. Its topography ordained that this semi-continent would remain, until the coming of railways, a medley of divided states. Under such conditions a government could have security only through a competent army; and as the army required, in frequent crises, a dictatorial leader immune to political eloquence, the form of government which developed in India was naturally monarchical. The people enjoyed a considerable measure of liberty under the native dynasties, partly through the autonomous communities in the villages and the trade guilds in the towns, and partly through the limitations that the Brahman aristocracy placed upon the authority of the king.<sup>11</sup> The laws of Manu, though they were more a code of ethics than a system of practised legislation, expressed the focal ideas of India about monarchy: that it should be impartially rigorous, and paternally solicitous of the public good.<sup>12</sup> The Mohammedan rulers paid less attention than their Hindu predecessors to these ideals and checks; they were a conquering minority, and rested their rule frankly on the superiority of their guns. “The army,” says a Moslem historian, with charming clarity, “is the source and means of government.”<sup>13</sup> Akbar was an exception, for he relied chiefly upon the good will of a people prospering under his mild and benevolent despotism. Perhaps in the circumstances his was the best government possible. Its vital defect, as we have seen, lay in its dependence upon the character of the king; the supreme centralized authority that proved beneficent under Akbar proved ruinous under Aurangzeb. Having been raised up by violence, the Afghan and Mogul rulers were always subject

to recall by assassination; and wars of succession were almost as expensive—though not as disturbing to economic life—as a modern election.\*

Under the Moslems law was merely the will of the emperor or sultan; under the Hindu kings it was a confused mixture of royal commands, village traditions and caste rules. Judgment was given by the head of the family, the head of the village, the headmen of the caste, the court of the guild, the governor of the province, the minister of the king, or the king himself.<sup>65</sup> Litigation was brief, judgment swift; lawyers came only with the British.<sup>66</sup> Torture was used under every dynasty until abolished by Firoz Shah.<sup>67</sup> Death was the penalty for any of a great variety of crimes, such as housebreaking, damage to royal property, or theft on a scale that would now make a man a very pillar of society. Punishments were cruel, and included amputation of hands, feet, nose or ears, tearing out of eyes, pouring molten lead into the throat, crushing the bones of hands and feet with a mallet, burning the body with fire, driving nails into the hands, feet or bosom, cutting the sinews, sawing men asunder, quartering them, impaling them, roasting them alive, letting them be trampled to death by elephants, or giving them to wild and hungry dogs.<sup>68</sup>†

No code of laws applied to all India. In the ordinary affairs of life the place of law was taken by the *dharma-shastras*—metrical textbooks of caste regulations and duties, composed by the Brahmans from a strictly

\* The story of how Nasiru-d-din poisoned his father Ghiyasu-d-din, Sultan of Delhi (1501), illustrates the Moslem conception of peaceable succession. Jehangir, who did his best to depose his father Akbar, tells the story:

"After this I went to the building containing the tombs of the Khalji rulers. The grave of Nasiru-d-din, whose face is blackened forever, was also there. It is well known that that wretch advanced himself by the murder of his father. Twice he gave him poison, and the father twice expelled it by means of a poison-antidote amulet he had on his arm. The third time the son mixed poison in a cup of sherbet and gave it to his father with his own hand. . . . As his father understood what efforts the son was making in this matter, he loosened the amulet from his arm and threw it before him; and then, turning his face in humility and supplication towards the throne of the Creator, said, 'O Lord, my age has arrived at eighty years, and I have passed this time in prosperity and happiness such as has been attained by no king. Now as this is my last time, I hope that thou wilt not seize Nasir for my murder, and that, reckoning my death as a thing decreed, thou wilt not avenge it.' After he had spoken these words, he drank off that poisoned cup of sherbet at a gulp, and delivered his soul to his Creator.

"When I went to his (Nasir's) tomb," adds the virtuous Jehangir, "I gave it several kicks."<sup>68</sup>

† Still more sadistic refinements of penology may be found in Dubois, p. 659.

Brahman point of view. The oldest of these is the so-called "Code of Manu." Manu was the mythical ancestor of the Manava tribe (or school) of Brahmans near Delhi; he was represented as the son of a god, and as receiving his laws from Brahma himself.<sup>90</sup> This code of 2685 verses, once assigned to 1200 B.C., is now referred vaguely to the first centuries of our era.<sup>91</sup> Originally intended as a handbook or guide to proper caste behavior for these Manava Brahmans, it was gradually accepted as a code of conduct by the entire Hindu community; and though never recognized by the Moslem kings it acquired, within the caste system, all the force of law. Its character will appear to some extent in the course of the following analysis of Hindu society and morals. In general it was marked by a superstitious acceptance of trial by ordeal,<sup>92</sup> a severe application of the *lex talionis*, and an untiring inculcation of the virtues, rights and powers of the Brahman caste.<sup>93</sup> Its effect was to strengthen enormously the hold of the caste system upon Hindu society.

This system had grown more rigid and complex since the Vedic period; not only because it is in the nature of institutions to become stiff with age, but because the instability of the political order, and the overrunning of India by alien peoples and creeds, had intensified caste as a barrier to the mixture of Moslem and Hindu blood. In Vedic days caste had been *varna*, or color; in medieval India it became *jati*, or birth. Its essence was twofold: the heredity of status, and the acceptance of *dharmā*—i.e., the traditional duties and employments of one's native caste.

The head and chief beneficiaries of the system were the eight million males of the Brahman caste.<sup>94</sup> Weakened for a while by the rise of Buddhism under Ashoka, the Brahmans, with that patient tenacity which characterizes priesthoods, had bided their time, and had recaptured power and leadership under the Gupta line. From the second century A.D. we find records of great gifts, usually of land, to the Brahman caste.<sup>95</sup>† These grants, like all Brahman property, were exempt from taxation until the

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\* Père Dubois, who, though unsympathetic to India, is usually truthful, gives us a picture of the ordeals used in his time (1820). "There are," he says, "several other kinds of trial by ordeal. Amongst the number is that of boiling oil which is mixed with cow-dung, and into which the accused must plunge his arm up to the elbow; and that of the snake, which consists in shutting up some very poisonous snake in a basket in which has been placed a ring or a piece of money which the accused must find and bring out with his eyes bandaged; if in the former case he is not scalded, and in the latter case is not bitten, his innocence is completely proved."<sup>92</sup>

† Tod believes that some of these charters were pious frauds.<sup>95</sup>

British came.<sup>66a</sup> The Code of Manu warns the king never to tax a Brahman, even when all other sources of revenue have failed; for a Brahman provoked to anger can instantly destroy the king and all his army by reciting curses and mystical texts.<sup>67</sup> It was not the custom of Hindus to make wills, since their traditions required that the property of the family should be held in common, and automatically descend from the dying to the surviving males;<sup>68</sup> but when, under the influence of European individualism, wills were introduced, they were greatly favored by the Brahmans, as an occasional means of securing property for ecclesiastical purposes.<sup>69</sup> The most important element in any sacrifice to the gods was the fee paid to the ministrant priest; the highest summit of piety was largesse in such fees.<sup>70</sup> Miracles and a thousand superstitions were another fertile source of sacerdotal wealth. For a consideration a Brahman might render a barren woman fecund; oracles were manipulated for financial ends; men were engaged to feign madness and to confess that their fate was a punishment for parsimony to the priests. In every illness, lawsuit, bad omen, unpleasant dream or new enterprise the advice of a Brahman was desirable, and the adviser was worthy of his hire.<sup>71</sup>

The power of the Brahmans was based upon a monopoly of knowledge. They were the custodians and remakers of tradition, the educators of children, the composers or editors of literature, the experts versed in the inspired and infallible *Vedas*. If a Shudra listened to the reading of the Scriptures his ears (according to the Brahmanical law books) were to be filled with molten lead; if he recited it his tongue was to be split; if he committed it to memory he was to be cut in two;<sup>72</sup> such were the threats, seldom enforced, with which the priests guarded their wisdom. Brahmanism thus became an exclusive cult, carefully hedged around against all vulgar participation.<sup>73</sup> According to the Code of Manu a Brahman was by divine right at the head of all creatures;<sup>74</sup> he did not, however, share in all the powers and privileges of the order until, after many years of preparation, he was made "twice-born" or regenerate by solemn investiture with the triple cord.<sup>75</sup> From that moment he became a holy being; his person and property were inviolate; indeed, according to Manu, "all that exists in this universe is the Brahman's property."<sup>76</sup> Brahmans were to be maintained by public and private gifts—not as charity, but as a sacred obligation;<sup>77</sup> hospitality to a Brahman was one of the highest re-

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\* Among the Dravidians, however, inheritance followed the female line.<sup>66b</sup>

ligious duties, and a Brahman not hospitably received could walk away with all the accumulated merits of the householder's good deeds.<sup>84</sup> Even if a Brahman committed every crime, he was not to be killed; the king might exile him, but must allow him to keep his property.<sup>85</sup> He who tried to strike a Brahman would suffer in hell for a hundred years; he who actually struck a Brahman would suffer in hell for a thousand years.<sup>86</sup> If a Shudra debauched the wife of a Brahman, the Shudra's property was to be confiscated, and his genitals were to be cut off.<sup>87</sup> A Shudra who killed a Shudra might atone for his crime by giving ten cows to the Brahmins; if he killed a Vaisya, he must give the Brahmins a hundred cows; if he killed a Kshatriya, he must give the Brahmins a thousand cows; if he killed a Brahman he must die; only the murder of a Brahman was really murder.<sup>88</sup>

The functions and obligations that corresponded to these privileges were numerous and burdensome. The Brahman not only acted as priest,<sup>†</sup> but trained himself for the clerical, pedagogical and literary professions. He was required to study law and learn the *Vedas*; every other duty was subordinate to this;<sup>89</sup> even to repeat the *Vedas* entitled the Brahman to beatitude, regardless of rites or works;<sup>90</sup> and if he memorized the *Rig-Veda* he might destroy the world without incurring any guilt.<sup>91</sup> He must not marry outside his caste; if he married a Shudra his children were to be pariahs;<sup>‡</sup> for, said Manu, "the man who is good by birth becomes low by low associations, but the man who is low by birth cannot become high by high associations."<sup>92</sup> The Brahman had to bathe every day, and again after being shaved by a barber of low caste; he had to purify with cow-dung the place where he intended to sleep; and he had to follow a strict hygienic ritual in attending to the duties of nature.<sup>93</sup> He was to abstain from all animal food, including eggs, and from onions, garlic, mushrooms and leeks. He was to drink nothing but water, and it must have been drawn and carried by a Brahman.<sup>94</sup> He was to abstain from unguents, perfumes, sensual pleasure, covetousness, and wrath.<sup>95</sup> If he touched an unclean

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\* Certain sexual perquisites seem to have belonged to some Brahman groups. The Nambudri Brahmins exercised the *jus primæ noctis* over all brides in their territory; and the Pushtimargiya priests of Bombay maintained this privilege until recent times.<sup>91</sup> If we may believe Père Dubois, the priests of the Temple of Tirupati (in southeastern India) offered to cure barrenness in all women who would spend a night at the temple.<sup>92</sup>

† Not all priests were Brahmins, and latterly many Brahmins have not been priests. In the United Provinces a large number of them are cooks.<sup>93</sup>

‡ This word is from the Tamil *paraiyan*, meaning one of low caste.

thing, or the person of any foreigner (even the Governor-General of India), he was to purify himself by ceremonial ablutions. If he committed a crime he had to accept a heavier punishment than would fall upon a lower caste: if, for example, a Shudra stole he was to be fined eightfold the sum or value of his theft; if a Vaisya stole he was to be fined sixteenfold; a Kshatriya, thirty-twofold; a Brahman, sixty-fourfold.<sup>99</sup> The Brahman was never to injure any living thing.<sup>100</sup>

Given a moderate observation of these rules, and a people too burdened with the tillage of the fields, and therefore too subject to the apparently personal whims of the elements, to rise out of superstition to education, the power of the priests grew from generation to generation, and made them the most enduring aristocracy in history. Nowhere else can we find this astonishing phenomenon—so typical of the slow rate of change in India—of an upper class maintaining its ascendancy and privileges through all conquests, dynasties and governments for 2500 years. Only the outcast Chandalas can rival them in perpetuity. The ancient Kshatriyas who had dominated the intellectual as well as the political field in the days of Buddha disappeared after the Gupta age; and though the Brahmans recognized the Rajput warriors as the later equivalent of the old fighting caste, the Kshatriyas, after the fall of Rajputana, soon became extinct. At last only two great divisions remained: the Brahmans as the social and mental rulers of India, and beneath them three thousand castes that were in reality industrial guilds.\*

Much can be said in defense of what, after monogamy, must be the most abused of all social institutions. The caste system had the eugenic value of keeping the presumably finer strains from dilution and disappearance through indiscriminate mixture; it established certain habits of diet and cleanliness as a rule of honor which all might observe and emulate; it gave order to the chaotic inequalities and differences of men, and spared the soul the modern fever of climbing and gain; it gave order to every life by prescribing for each man a *dharma*, or code of conduct for his caste; it gave order to every trade and profession, elevated every occupation into a vocation not lightly to be changed, and, by making every industry a caste, provided its members with a means of united action against exploitation and tyranny. It offered an escape from the plutocracy or the military dictatorship which are apparently the only alterna-

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\* On the caste system in our time cf. Chap. xxii, Sect. iv, below.

tives to aristocracy; it gave to a country shorn of political stability by a hundred invasions and revolutions a social, moral and cultural order and continuity rivaled only by the Chinese. Amid a hundred anarchic changes in the state, the Brahmans maintained, through the system of caste, a stable society, and preserved, augmented and transmitted civilization. The nation bore with them patiently, even proudly, because every one knew that in the end they were the one indispensable government of India.

### III. MORALS AND MARRIAGE

*"Dharma"—Children—Child marriage—The art of love—Prostitution—Romantic love—Marriage—The family—Woman—Her intellectual life—Her rights—"Purdah"—Suttee—The Widow*

When the caste system dies the moral life of India will undergo a long transition of disorder, for there the moral code has been bound up almost inseparably with caste. Morality was *dharma*—the rule of life for each man as determined by his caste. To be a Hindu meant not so much to accept a creed as to take a place in the caste system, and to accept the *dharma* or duties attaching to that place by ancient tradition and regulation. Each post had its obligations, its limitations and its rights; with them and within them the pious Hindu would lead his life, finding in them a certain contentment of routine, and never thinking of stepping into another caste. "Better thine own work is, though done with fault," said the *Bhagavad-Gita*,<sup>98</sup> "than doing others' work, even excellently." *Dharma* is to the individual what its normal development is to a seed—the orderly fulfilment of an inherent nature and destiny.<sup>99</sup> So old is this conception of morality that even today it is difficult for all, and impossible for most, Hindus to think of themselves except as members of a specific caste, guided and bound by its rule. "Without caste," says an English historian, "Hindu society is inconceivable."<sup>100</sup>

In addition to the *dharma* of each caste the Hindu recognized a general *dharma* or obligation affecting all castes, and embracing chiefly respect for Brahmans, and reverence for cows.<sup>101</sup> Next to these duties was that of bearing children. "Then only is a man a perfect man," says Manu's code,<sup>102</sup> "when he is three—himself, his wife, and his son." Not only would children be economic assets to their parents, and support them as a matter of course in old age, but they would carry on the household

worship of their ancestors, and would offer to them periodically the food without which these ghosts would starve.<sup>11</sup> Consequently there was no birth control in India, and abortion was branded as a crime equal to the murder of a Brahman.<sup>101</sup> Infanticide occurred,<sup>102</sup> but it was exceptional; the father was glad to have children, and proud to have many. The tenderness of the old to the young is one of the fairest aspects of Hindu civilization.<sup>103</sup>

The child was hardly born when the parents began to think of its marriage. For marriage, in the Hindu system, was compulsory; an unmarried man was an outcast, without social status or consideration, and prolonged virginity was a disgrace.<sup>104</sup> Nor was marriage to be left to the whim of individual choice or romantic love; it was a vital concern of society and the race, and could not safely be entrusted to the myopia of passion or the accidents of proximity;<sup>105</sup> it must be arranged by the parents before the fever of sex should have time to precipitate a union doomed, in the Hindu view, to disillusionment and bitterness. Manu gave the name of *Gandharva* marriage to unions by mutual choice, and stigmatized them as born of desire; they were permissible, but hardly respectable.

The early maturity of the Hindu, making a girl of twelve as old as a girl of fourteen or fifteen in America, created a difficult problem of moral and social order.<sup>1</sup> Should marriage be arranged to coincide with sexual maturity, or should it be postponed, as in America, until the male arrives at economic maturity? The first solution apparently weakens the national physique,<sup>106</sup> unduly accelerates the growth of population, and sacrifices the woman almost completely to reproduction; the second solution leaves the problems of unnatural delay, sexual frustration, prostitution, and venereal disease. The Hindus chose child marriage as the lesser evil, and tried to mitigate its dangers by establishing, between the marriage and its consummation, a period in which the bride should remain with her parents until the coming of puberty.<sup>107</sup> The institution was old, and therefore holy; it had been rooted in the desire to prevent intercaste marriage through casual sexual attraction;<sup>108</sup> it was later encouraged by the fact that the conquering and otherwise ruthless Moslems were restrained

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\* It should be added that Gandhi denies that this precocity has any physical basis. "I loathe and detest child marriage," he writes. "I shudder to see a child widow. I have never known a grosser superstition than that the Indian climate causes sexual precocity. What does bring about untimely puberty is the mental and moral atmosphere surrounding family life."<sup>109</sup>



by their religion from carrying away *married* women as slaves;<sup>22</sup> and finally it took rigid form in the parental resolve to protect the girl from the erotic sensibilities of the male.

That these were reasonably keen, and that the male might be trusted to attend to his biological functions on the slightest provocation, appears from the Hindu literature of love. The *Kamasutra*, or "Doctrine of Desire," is the most famous in a long list of works revealing a certain preoccupation with the physical and mental technique of sex. It was composed, the author assures us, "according to the precepts of Holy Writ, for the benefit of the world, by Vatsyayana, while leading the life of a religious student at Benares, and wholly engaged in the contemplation of the Deity."<sup>23</sup> "He who neglects a girl, thinking she is too bashful," says this anchorite, "is despised by her as a beast ignorant of the working of the female mind."<sup>24</sup> Vatsyayana gives a delightful picture of a girl in love,<sup>25</sup> but his wisdom is lavished chiefly upon the parental art of getting her married away, and the husbandly art of keeping her physically content.

We must not presume that the sexual sensitivity of the Hindu led to any unusual license. Child marriage raised a barrier against premarital relations, and the strong religious sanctions used in the inculcation of wifely fidelity made adultery far more difficult and rare than in Europe or America. Prostitution was for the most part confined to the temples. In the south the needs of the esurient male were met by the providential institution of *devadasis*—literally "servants of the gods," actually prostitutes. Each Tamil temple had a troop of "sacred women," engaged at first to dance and sing before the idols, and perhaps to entertain the Brahmans. Some of them seem to have lived lives of almost conventual seclusion; others were allowed to extend their services to all who could pay, on condition that a part of their earnings should be contributed to the clergy. Many of these temple courtesans, or *nautch*\* girls, provided dancing and singing in public functions and private gatherings, in the style of the *geishas* of Japan; some of them learned to read, and, like the *hetairai* of Greece, furnished cultured conversation in homes where the married women were neither encouraged to read nor allowed to mingle with guests. In 1004 A.D., as a sacred inscription informs us, the temple of the Chola King Rajaraja at Tanjore had four hundred *devadasis*. The custom

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\* From the Hindu *nāch*, dancer.

acquired the sanctity of time, and no one seems to have considered it immoral; respectable women now and then dedicated a daughter to the profession of temple prostitute in much the same spirit in which a son might be dedicated to the priesthood.<sup>127</sup> Dubois, at the beginning of the nineteenth century, described the temples of the south as in some cases "converted into mere brothels"; the *devadasis*, whatever their original functions, were frankly called harlots by the public, and were used as such. If we may believe the old *abbé*, who had no reason to be prejudiced in favor of India,

their official duties consist in dancing and singing within the temples twice a day, . . . and also at all public ceremonies. The first they execute with sufficient grace, although their attitudes are lascivious and their gestures indecorous. As regards their singing, it is almost always confined to obscene verses describing some licentious episode in the history of their gods.<sup>128</sup>

Under these circumstances of temple prostitution and child marriage little opportunity was given for what we call "romantic love." This idealistic devotion of one sex to the other appears in Indian literature—for example in the poems of Chandi Das and Jayadeva—but usually as a symbol of the soul surrendering to God; while in actual life it took most often the form of the complete devotion of the wife to her mate. The love poetry is sometimes of the ethereal type depicted by the Tennysons and Longfellow of our Puritan tradition; sometimes it is the full-bodied and sensuous passion of the Elizabethan stage.<sup>129</sup> One writer unites religion and love, and sees in either ecstasy a recognition of identity; another lists the three hundred and sixty different emotions that fill the lover's heart, and counts the patterns which his teeth have left on his beloved's flesh, or shows him decorating her breasts with painted flowers of sandal paste; and the author of the Nala and Damayanti episode in the *Mahabharata* describes the melancholy sighs and pale dyspepsia of the lovers in the best style of the French troubadours.<sup>130</sup>

Such whimsical passions were seldom permitted to determine marriage in India. Manu allowed eight different forms of marriage, in which marriage by capture and marriage "from affection" were ranked lowest in the moral scale, and marriage by purchase was accepted as the sensible way of arranging a union; in the long run, the Hindu legislator thought,

those marriages are most soundly based that rest upon an economic foundation.<sup>121</sup> In the days of Dubois "to marry" and "to buy a wife" were "synonymous expressions in India."<sup>122</sup> The wisest marriage was held to be one arranged by the parents with full regard for the rules of endogamy and exogamy: the youth must marry within his caste, and outside his *gotra* or group.<sup>121</sup> He might take several wives, but only one of his own caste—who was to have precedence over the rest; preferably, said Manu, he was to be monogamous.<sup>†124</sup> The woman was to love her husband with patient devotion; the husband was to give to his wife not romantic affection, but solicitous protection.<sup>123</sup>

The Hindu family was typically patriarchal, with the father full master of his wife, his children, and his slaves.<sup>127</sup> Woman was a lovely but inferior being. In the beginning, says Hindu legend, when Twashtri, the Divine Artificer, came to the creation of woman he found that he had exhausted his materials in the making of man, and had no solid elements left. In this dilemma he fashioned her eclectically out of the odds and ends of creation:

He took the rotundity of the moon, and the curves of creepers, and the clinging of tendrils, and the trembling of grass, and the slenderness of the reed, and the bloom of flowers, and the lightness of leaves, and the tapering of the elephant's trunk, and the glances of deer, and the clustering of rows of bees, and the joyous gaiety of sunbeams, and the weeping of clouds, and the fickleness of the winds, and the timidity of the hare, and the vanity of the peacock, and the softness of the parrot's bosom, and the hardness of adamant, and the sweetness of honey, and the cruelty of the tiger, and the warm glow of fire, and the coldness of snow, and the chattering of jays, and the cooing of the *kokila*, and the hypocrisy of the crane, and the fidelity of the *chakravaka*; and compounding all these together he made woman, and gave her to man.<sup>128</sup>

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\* Strabo (ca. 20 A.D.), relying on Aristobulus, describes "some novel and unusual customs at Taxila: those who by reason of poverty are unable to marry off their daughters, lead them forth to the market place in the power of their age to the sound of both trumpets and drums (precisely the instruments used to signal the call to battle), thus assembling a crowd; and to any man who comes forward they first expose her rear parts up to the shoulders, and then her front parts, and if she pleases him, and at the same time allows herself to be persuaded, on approved terms, he marries her."<sup>128</sup>

† Among the Rajputs, if we may believe Tod, it was usual for the prince to have different wives for each day of the week.<sup>128</sup>

Nevertheless, despite all this equipment, woman fared poorly in India. Her high status in Vedic days was lost under priestly influence and Mohammedan example. The Code of Manu set the tone against her in phrases reminiscent of an early stage in Christian theology: "The source of dishonor is woman; the source of strife is woman; the source of earthly existence is woman; therefore avoid woman."<sup>10</sup> "A female," says another passage, "is able to draw from the right path in this life not a fool only but even a sage, and can lead him in subjection to desire or to wrath."<sup>11</sup> The law laid it down that all through her life woman should be in tutelage, first to her father, then to her husband, and finally to her son.<sup>12</sup> The wife addressed her husband humbly as "master," "lord," even as "my god"; in public she walked some distance behind him, and seldom received a word from him.<sup>13</sup> She was expected to show her devotion by the most minute service, preparing the meals, eating—after they had finished—the food left by her husband and her sons, and embracing her husband's feet at bedtime.<sup>14</sup> "A faithful wife," said Manu, "must serve . . . her lord as if he were a god, and never do aught to pain him, whatsoever be his state, and even though devoid of every virtue."<sup>15</sup> A wife who disobeyed her husband would become a jackal in her next incarnation.<sup>16</sup>

Like their sisters in Europe and America before our own times, the women of India received education only if they were ladies of high degree, or temple prostitutes.<sup>17</sup> The art of reading was considered inappropriate in a woman; her power over men could not be increased by it, and her attractiveness would be diminished. Says Chitra in Tagore's play: "When a woman is merely a woman—when she winds herself round and round men's hearts with her smiles and sobs and services and caressing endearments—then she is happy. Of what use to her are learning and great achievements?"<sup>18</sup> Knowledge of the *Vedas* was denied to her;<sup>19</sup> "for a woman to study the *Vedas*," says the *Mahabharata*, "is a sign of confusion in the realm."<sup>20</sup> Megasthenes reported, in Chandragupta's days, that "the Brahmans keep their wives—and they have many wives—ignorant of all philosophy; for if women learned to look upon pleasure and pain, life and death, philosophically, they would become depraved, or else no longer remain in subjection."<sup>21</sup>

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\* We must compare this attitude not with our contemporary European or American views, but with the reluctance of the medieval clergy to allow a general reading of the Bible, or the intellectual education of woman.

In the Code of Manu three persons were ineligible to hold property: a wife, a son, and a slave; whatever these might earn became the property of their master.<sup>149</sup> A wife, however, could retain as her own the dowry and gifts that she had received at her nuptials; and the mother of a prince might govern in his stead during his minority.<sup>150</sup> The husband could divorce his wife for unchastity; the woman could not divorce her husband for any cause.<sup>151</sup> A wife who drank liquor, or was diseased, or rebellious, or wasteful, or quarrelsome, might at any time be (not divorced but) superseded by another wife. Passages of the Code advocate an enlightened gentleness to women: they are not to be struck "even with a flower"; they are not to be watched too strictly, for then their subtlety will find a way to mischief; and if they like fine raiment it is wise to indulge them, for "if the wife be not elegantly attired, she will not exhilarate her husband," whereas when "a wife is gaily adorned, the whole house is embellished."<sup>152</sup> Way must be made for a woman, as for the aged or a priest; and "pregnant women, brides, and damsels shall have food before all other guests."<sup>153</sup> Though woman could not rule as a wife, she might rule as a mother; the greatest tenderness and respect was paid to the mother of many children; and even the patriarchal code of Manu said, "The mother exceedeth a thousand fathers in the right to reverence."<sup>154</sup>

Doubtless the influx of Islamic ideas had something to do with the decline in the status of woman in India after Vedic days. The custom of *purdah* (curtain)—the seclusion of married women—came into India with the Persians and the Mohammedans, and has therefore been stronger in the north than in the south. Partly to protect their wives from the Moslems, Hindu husbands developed a system of *purdah* so rigid that a respectable woman could show herself only to her husband and her sons, and could move in public only under a heavy veil; even the doctor who treated her and took her pulse had to do so through a curtain.<sup>155</sup> In some circles it was a breach of good manners to inquire after a man's wife, or to speak, as a guest, to the ladies of the house.<sup>156</sup>

The custom of burning widows on their husbands' pyres was also an importation into India. Herodotus describes it as practised by the ancient Scythians and Thracians; if we may believe him, the wives of a Thracian fought for the privilege of being slain over his grave.<sup>157</sup> Probably the rite came down from the almost world-wide primitive usage of immolating one or more of the wives or concubines of a prince or rich man, along with slaves and other perquisites, to take care of him in the Beyond.<sup>158</sup> The

*Attharva-veda* speaks of it as an old custom, but the *Rig-veda* indicates that in Vedic days it had been softened to the requirement that the widow should lie on her husband's pyre for a moment before his cremation.<sup>172</sup> The *Mahabharata* shows the institution restored and unrepentant; it gives several examples of suttee,\* and lays down the rule that the chaste widow does not wish to survive her husband, but enters proudly into the fire.<sup>173</sup> The sacrifice was effected by burning the wife in a pit, or, among the Telugus in the south, by burying her alive.<sup>174</sup> Strabo reports that suttee prevailed in India in the time of Alexander, and that the Kathæi, a Punjab tribe, had made suttee a law in order to prevent wives from poisoning their husbands.<sup>175</sup> Manu makes no mention of the practice. The Brahmans opposed it at first, then accepted it, and finally lent it a religious sanction by interpreting it as bound up with the eternity of marriage: a woman once married to a man remained his forever, and would be rejoined to him in his later lives.<sup>176</sup> In Rajasthan the absolute possession of the wife by the husband took the form of the *johur*, in which a Rajput, facing certain defeat, immolated his wives before advancing to his own death in battle.<sup>177</sup> The usage was widespread under the Moguls, despite Moslem abhorrence; and even the powerful Akbar failed to dislodge it. On one occasion Akbar himself tried to dissuade a Hindu bride who wished to be burned on the pyre of her dead betrothed; but though the Brahmans added their pleas to the king's, she insisted on the sacrifice; as the flames reached her, and Akbar's son Daniyal continued to argue with her, she replied, "Do not annoy, do not annoy." Another widow, rejecting similar pleas, held her finger in the flame of a lamp until the finger was completely burned; giving no sign of pain, she indicated in this way her scorn of those who advised her to refuse the rite.<sup>178</sup> In Vijayanagar suttee sometimes took a wholesale form; not one or a few but all of the many wives of a prince or a captain followed him to death. Conti reports that the Raya or King had selected three thousand of his twelve thousand wives as favorites, "on condition that at his death they should voluntarily burn themselves with him, which is considered to be a great honor for them."<sup>179</sup> It is difficult to say how thoroughly the medieval Hindu widow was reconciled to suttee by religious inculcation and belief, and the hope of reunion with her husband in another life.

Suttee became less and less popular as India developed contacts with

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\*More properly *sati*, pronounced *suttee*, and meaning "devoted wife."

Europe; but the Hindu widow continued to suffer many disabilities. Since marriage bound a woman eternally to her husband, her remarriage after his death was a mortal offense, and was bound to create confusion in his later existences. The widow was therefore required by Brahmanical law to remain unmarried, to shave her head, and live out her life (if she did not prefer suttee) in the care of her children and in acts of private charity.<sup>100</sup> She was not left destitute; on the contrary she had a first lien on her husband's estate for her maintenance.<sup>101</sup> These rules were followed only by the orthodox women of the middle and upper classes—i.e., by some thirty per cent of the population; they were ignored by Moslems, Sikhs, and the lower castes.<sup>102</sup> Hindu opinion likened this second virginity of the widow to the celibacy of nuns in Christendom; in either case some women renounced marriage, and were set aside for charitable ministrations.\*

#### IV. MANNERS, CUSTOMS AND CHARACTER

##### *Sexual modesty—Hygiene—Dress—Appearance—The gentle art among the Hindus—Faults and virtues—Games— Festivals—Death*

It will seem incredible to the provincial mind that the same people that tolerated such institutions as child marriage, temple prostitution and suttee was also pre-eminent in gentleness, decency and courtesy. Aside from a few *devadasis*, prostitutes were rare in India, and sexual propriety was exceptionally high. "It must be admitted," says the unsympathetic Dubois, "that the laws of etiquette and social politeness are much more clearly laid down, and much better observed by all classes of Hindus, even by the lowest, than they are by people of corresponding social position in Europe."<sup>103</sup> The leading rôle played by sex in Occidental conversation and wit was quite alien to Hindu manners, which forbade any public intimacy between men and women, and looked upon the physical contact of the sexes in dancing as improper and obscene.<sup>104</sup> A Hindu woman might go anywhere in public without fear of molestation or insult;<sup>105</sup> indeed the

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\* In considering alien customs we must continually remind ourselves that foreign practices cannot be judged intelligently by our own moral code. "The superficial observer who applies his own standard to the customs of all nations," says Tod, "laments with affected philanthropy the degraded condition of the Hindu female, in which sentiment he would find her little disposed to join him."<sup>106</sup> On contemporary changes in these customs cf. Chapter XXII below.

risk, as the Oriental saw the matter, was all on the other side. Manu warns men: "Woman is by nature ever inclined to tempt man; hence a man should not sit in a secluded place even with his nearest female relative"; and he must never look higher than the ankles of a passing girl.<sup>107</sup>

Cleanliness was literally next to godliness in India; hygiene was not, as Anatole France thought it, *la seule morale*, but it was made an essential part of piety. Manu laid down, many centuries ago, an exacting code of physical refinement. "Early in the morning," one instruction reads, "let him" (the Brahman) "bathe, decorate his body, clean his teeth, apply collyrium to his eyes, and worship the gods."<sup>108</sup> The native schools made good manners and personal cleanliness the first courses in the curriculum. Every day the caste Hindu would bathe his body, and wash the simple robe he was to wear; it seemed to him abominable to use the same garment, unwashed, for more than a day.<sup>109</sup> "The Hindus," said Sir William Huber, "stand out as examples of bodily cleanliness among Asiatic races, and, we may add, among the races of the world. The ablutions of the Hindu have passed into a proverb."<sup>110</sup>

Yuan Chwang, 1300 years ago, described thus the eating habits of the Hindus:

They are pure of themselves, and not from compulsion. Before every meal they must have a wash; the fragments and remains are not served up again; the food utensils are not passed on; those which are of pottery or of wood must be thrown away after use, and those which are of gold, silver, copper or iron get another polishing. As soon as a meal is over they chew the tooth-stick and make themselves clean. Before they have finished ablutions they do not come in contact with each other.<sup>111</sup>

The Brahman usually washed his hands, feet and teeth before and after each meal; he ate with his fingers from food on a leaf, and thought it unclean to use twice a plate, a knife or a fork; and when finished he rinsed his mouth seven times.<sup>112</sup> The toothbrush was always new—a twig freshly plucked from a tree; to the Hindu it seemed disreputable to brush the teeth with the hair of an animal, or to use the same brush twice:<sup>113</sup> so many are the ways in which men may scorn one another. The Hindu

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\* A great Hindu, Lajpat Rai, reminded Europe that "long before the European nations knew anything of hygiene, and long before they realized the value of tooth-brush and a daily bath, the Hindus were, as a rule, given to both. Only twenty years ago London houses had no bath-tubs, and the tooth-brush was a luxury."<sup>114</sup>



chewed almost incessantly the leaf of the betel plant, which blackened the teeth in a manner disagreeable to Europeans, and agreeable to himself. This and the occasional use of opium consoled him for his usual abstention from tobacco and intoxicating drinks.

Hindu law books give explicit rules for menstrual hygiene,<sup>176</sup> and for meeting the demands of nature. Nothing could exceed in complexity or solemnity the ritual for Brahman defecation.<sup>177</sup> The Twice-born must use only his left hand in this rite, and must cleanse the parts with water; and he considered his house defiled by the very presence of Europeans who contented themselves with paper.<sup>177</sup> The Outcastes, however, and many Shudras, were less particular, and might turn any roadside into a privy.<sup>178</sup> In the quarters occupied by these classes public sanitation was confined to an open sewer line in the middle of the street.<sup>179</sup>

In so warm a climate clothing was a superfluity, and beggars and saints bridged the social scale in agreeing to do without it. One southern caste, like the Canadian Doukhobors, threatened to migrate if its members were compelled to wear clothing.<sup>180</sup> Until the late eighteenth century it was probably the custom in southern India (as still in Bali) for both sexes to go naked above the waist.<sup>181</sup> Children were dressed for the most part in beads and rings. Most of the population went barefoot; if the orthodox Hindu wore shoes they had to be of cloth, for under no circumstances would he use shoes of leather. A large number of the men contented themselves with loin cloths; when they needed more covering they bound some fabric about the waist, and threw the loose end over the left shoulder. The Rajputs wore trousers of every color and shape, with a tunic girdled by a *ceinture*, a scarf at the neck, sandals or boots on the feet, and a turban on the head. The turban had come in with the Moslems, and had been taken over by the Hindus, who wound it carefully around the head in varying manner according to caste, but always with the generosity of a magician unfurling endless silk; sometimes one turban, unraveled, reached a length of seventy feet.<sup>182</sup> The women wore a flowing robe—colorful silk *sari*, or homespun *khaddar*—which passed over both shoulders, clasped the waist tightly, and then fell to the feet; often a few inches of bronze flesh were left bare below the breast. Hair was oiled to guard it against the desiccating sun; men divided theirs in the center and drew it together into a tuft behind the left ear; women coiled a part of theirs upon their heads, but let the rest hang free, often decorating it with flowers, or covering it with a scarf. The men were handsome, the young women were beautiful and all presented a magnificent carriage;<sup>183</sup> an ordinary Hindu in a loin cloth often had more dignity

than a European diplomat completely equipped. Pierre Loti thought it "incontestable that the beauty of the Aryan race reaches its highest development of perfection and refinement among the upper class" in India.<sup>184</sup> Both sexes were adept in cosmetics, and the women felt naked without jewelry. A ring in the left nostril denoted marriage. On the forehead, in most cases, was a painted symbol of religious faith.

It is difficult to go below these surface appearances and describe the character of the Hindus, for every people harbors all virtues and all vices, and witnesses tend to select such of these as will point their moral and adorn their tale. "I think we may take as their greatest vice," says Père Dubois, "the untrustworthiness, deceit and double-dealing . . . which are common to all Hindus. . . . Certain it is that there is no nation in the world which thinks so lightly of an oath or of perjury."<sup>185</sup> "Lying," says Westermarck, "has been called the national vice of the Hindus."<sup>186</sup> "Hindus are wily and deceitful," says Macaulay.<sup>187</sup> According to the laws of Manu and the practice of the world a lie told for good motives is forgivable; if, for example, the death of a priest would result from speaking the truth, falsehood is justifiable.<sup>188</sup> But Yuan Chwang tells us: "They do not practice deceit, and they keep their sworn obligations. . . . They will not take anything wrongfully, and they yield more than fairness requires."<sup>189</sup> Abu-l Fazl, not prejudiced in favor of India, reports the Hindus of the sixteenth century as "religious, affable, cheerful, lovers of justice, given to retirement, able in business, admirers of truth, grateful, and of unbounded fidelity."<sup>190</sup> "Their honesty," said honest Keir Hardie, "is proverbial. They borrow and lend on word of mouth, and the repudiation of a debt is almost unknown."<sup>191</sup> "I have had before me," says a British judge in India, "hundreds of cases in which a man's property, liberty and life depended upon his telling a lie, and he has refused to tell it."<sup>192</sup> How shall we reconcile these conflicting testimonies? Perhaps it is very simple: some Hindus are honest, and some are not.

Again the Hindus are very cruel and gentle. The English language has derived a short and ugly word from that strange secret society—almost a caste—of *Thugs* which in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries committed thousands of atrocious murders in order (they said) to offer the victims as sacrifices to the goddess Kali.<sup>193</sup> Vincent Smith writes of these Thugs (literally, "cheats") in terms not quite irrelevant to our time:

The gangs had little to fear, and enjoyed almost complete immunity; . . . they always had powerful protectors. The moral feeling of the people had sunk so low that there were no signs of general reprehension of the cold-blooded crimes committed by the

Thugs. They were accepted as part of the established order of things; and until the secrets of the organization were given away, . . . it was usually impossible to obtain evidence against even the most notorious Thugs.<sup>105a</sup>

Nevertheless there is comparatively little crime in India, and little violence. By universal admission the Hindus are gentle to the point of timidity;<sup>106</sup> too worshipful and good-natured, too long broken upon the wheel of conquest and alien despotisms, to be good fighters except in the sense that they can bear pain with unequalled bravery.<sup>105</sup> Their greatest faults are probably listlessness and laziness; but in the Hindus these are not faults but climatic necessities and adaptations, like the *dolce far niente* of the Latin peoples, and the economic fever of Americans. The Hindus are sensitive, emotional, temperamental, imaginative; therefore they are better artists and poets than rulers or executives. They can exploit their fellows with the same zest that characterizes the *entrepreneur* everywhere; yet they are given to limitless charity, and are the most hospitable hosts this side of barbarism.<sup>106</sup> Even their enemies admit their courtesy,<sup>107</sup> and a generous Britisher sums up his long experience by ascribing to the higher classes in Calcutta "polished manners, clearness and comprehensiveness of understanding, liberality of feeling, and independence of principle, that would have stamped them gentlemen in any country in the world."<sup>108</sup>

The Hindu genius, to an outsider, seems sombre, and doubtless the Hindus have not had much cause for laughter. The dialogues of Buddha indicate a great variety of games, including one that strangely resembles chess;<sup>109\*</sup>

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\* Chess is so old that half the nations of antiquity claim its birthplace. The view generally accepted by archeologists of the game is that it arose in India; certainly we find there its oldest indisputable appearance (ca. 750 A.D.). The word *chess* comes from the Persian *shah*, king; and *checkmate* is originally *shah-mat*—"king dead." The Persians called it *shatranj*, and took both the word and the game, through the Arabs, from India, where it was known as *chaturanga*, or "four angles"—elephants, horses, chariots and foot-soldiers. The Arabs still call the bishop *al-fil*—i.e., elephant (from *aleph-hind*, Arabic for "ox of India").<sup>109</sup>

The Hindus tell a delightful legend to account for the origin of the game. At the beginning of the fifth century of our era (the story goes), a Hindu monarch offended his Brahman and Kshatriya admirers by ignoring their counsels and forgetting that the love of the people is the surest support of a throne. A Brahman, Sissa, undertook to open the eyes of the young king by devising a game in which the piece that represented the king, though highest in dignity and value (as in Oriental war), should be, alone, almost helpless; hence came chess. The ruler liked the game so well that he invited Sissa to name his reward. Sissa modestly asked for some grains of rice, the quantity to be determined by placing one grain upon the first of the sixty-four squares of the chess-board, and then doubling the number of grains with each succeeding square. The king agreed at

but neither these nor their successors exhibit the vivacity and joyousness of Western games. Akbar, in the sixteenth century, introduced into India the game of polo,\* which had apparently come from Persia and was making its way across Tibet to China and Japan;<sup>302</sup> and it pleased him to play *pachisi* (the modern "parchesi") on squares cut in the pavement of the palace quadrangle at Agra, with pretty slave-girls as living pieces.<sup>303</sup>

Frequent religious festivals lent color to public life. Greatest of all was the *Durga-Puja*, in honor of the great goddess-mother Kali. For weeks before its approach the Hindus feasted and sang; but the culminating ceremonial was a procession in which every family carried an image of the goddess to the Ganges, flung it into the river, and returned homeward with all merriness spent.<sup>304</sup> The *Holi* festival celebrated in honor of the goddess Vasanti took on a Saturnalian character: phallic emblems were carried in parade, and were made to simulate the motions of coitus.<sup>305</sup> In Chota Nagpur the harvest was the signal for general license; "men set aside all conventions, women all modesty, and complete liberty was given to the girls." The Parganait, a caste of peasants in the Rajmahal Hills, held an annual agricultural festival in which the unmarried were allowed to indulge freely in promiscuous relations.<sup>306</sup> Doubtless we have here again relics of vegetation magic, intended to promote the fertility of families and the fields. More decorous were the wedding festivals that marked the great event in the life of every Hindu; many a father brought himself to ruin in providing a sumptuous feast for the marriage of his daughter or his son.<sup>307</sup>

At the other end of life was the final ceremony—cremation. In Buddha's days the Zoroastrian exposure of the corpse to birds of prey was the usual mode of departure; but persons of distinction were burned, after death, on a pyre, and their ashes were buried under a *tope* or *stupa*—i.e., a memorial shrine.<sup>308</sup> In later days cremation became the privilege of every man; each night one might see fagots being brought together for the burning of the dead. In Yuan Chwang's time it was not unusual for the very old to take death by the forelock and have themselves rowed by their children to the middle of the Ganges, where they threw themselves

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once, but was soon surprised to find that he had promised away his kingdom. Sissa took the opportunity to point out to his master how easily a monarch may be led astray when he scorns his counsellors.<sup>309</sup> *Credat qui vult.*

\* From the Tibetan word *pulu*, Hindu Balti dialect *polo*, meaning ball; cf. the Latin *pila*.

into the saving stream.<sup>200</sup> Suicide under certain conditions has always found more approval in the East than in the West; it was permitted under the laws of Akbar to the old or the incurably diseased, and to those who wished to offer themselves as sacrifices to the gods. Thousands of Hindus have made their last oblation by starving themselves to death, or burying themselves in snow, or covering themselves with cow-dung and setting it on fire, or allowing alligators to devour them at the mouths of the Ganges. Among the Brahmans a form of *hara-kiri* arose, by which suicide was committed to avenge an injury or point a wrong. When one of the Rajput kings levied a subsidy upon the priestly caste, several of the wealthiest Brahmans stabbed themselves to death in his presence, laying upon him the supposedly most terrible and effective curse of all—that of a dying priest. The Brahmanical lawbooks required that he who had resolved to die by his own hand should fast for three days; and that he who attempted suicide and failed should perform the severest penances.<sup>201</sup> Life is a stage with one entrance, but many exits.

## The Paradise of the Gods

IN no other country is religion so powerful, or so important, as in India. If the Hindus have permitted alien governments to be set over them again and again it is partly because they did not care much who ruled or exploited them—natives or foreigners; the crucial matter was religion, not politics; the soul, not the body; endless later lives rather than this passing one. When Ashoka became a saint, and Akbar almost adopted Hinduism, the power of religion was revealed over even the strongest men. In our century it is a saint, rather than a statesman, who for the first time in history has unified all India.

### I. THE LATER HISTORY OF BUDDHISM

*The Zenith of Buddhism — The Two Vehicles — "Mahayana"—  
Buddhism, Stoicism and Christianity — The decay of Bud-  
dhism—Its migrations: Ceylon, Burma, Turkestan, Tibet,  
Cambodia, China, Japan*

Two hundred years after Ashoka's death Buddhism reached the peak of its curve in India. The period of Buddhist growth from Ashoka to Harsha was in many ways the climax of Indian religion, education and art. But the Buddhism that prevailed was not that of Buddha; we might better describe it as that of his rebellious disciple Subhadda, who, on hearing of the Master's death, said to the monks: "Enough, sirs! Weep not, neither lament! We are well rid of the great *Samana*. We used to be annoyed by being told, 'This becoms you, this becoms you not.' But now we shall be able to do whatever we like; and what we do not like, that we shall not have to do!"

The first thing they did with their freedom was to split into sects. Within two centuries of Buddha's death eighteen varieties of Buddhistic doctrine had divided the Master's heritage. The Buddhists of south India and Ceylon held fast for a time to the simpler and purer creed of the Founder, which came to be called *Hinayana*, or the "Lesser Vehicle":

they worshiped Buddha as a great teacher, but not as a god, and their Scriptures were the Pali texts of the more ancient faith. But throughout northern India, Tibet, Mongolia, China and Japan the Buddhism that prevailed was the *Mahayana*, or the "Greater Vehicle," defined and propagated by Kanishka's Council; these (politically) inspired theologians announced the divinity of Buddha, surrounded him with angels and saints, adopted the *Yoga* asceticism of Patanjali, and issued in Sanskrit a new set of Holy Writ which, though it lent itself readily to metaphysical and scholastic refinements, proclaimed and certified a more popular religion than the austere pessimism of Shakya-muni.

The *Mahayana* was Buddhism softened with Brahmanical deities, practices and myths, and adapted to the needs of the Kushan Tatars and the Mongols of Tibet, over whom Kanishka had extended his rule. A heaven was conceived in which there were many Buddhas, of whom Amida Buddha, the Redeemer, came to be the best beloved by the people; this heaven and a corresponding hell were to be the reward or punishment of good or evil done on earth, and would thereby liberate some of the King's militia for other services. The greatest of the saints, in this new theology, were the *Bodhisattvas*, or future Buddhas, who voluntarily refrained from achieving the *Nirvana* (here freedom from rebirth) that was within their merit and power, in order to be reborn into life after life, and to help others on earth to find the Way.\* As in Mediterranean Christianity, these saints became so popular that they almost crowded out the head of the pantheon in worship and art. The veneration of relics, the use of holy water, candles, incense, the rosary, clerical vestments, a liturgical dead language, monks and nuns, monastic tonsure and celibacy, confession, fast days, the canonization of saints, purgatory and masses for the dead flourished in Buddhism as in medieval Christianity, and seem to have appeared in Buddhism first.† *Mahayana* became to *Himayana* or primitive Buddhism what Catholicism was to Stoicism and primitive Christianity. Buddha, like Luther, had made

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\* In one of the *Puranas* there is a typical legend of the king who, though deserving heaven, stays in hell to comfort the sufferers, and will not leave it until all the damned are released.<sup>a</sup>

† "The Buddhists," says Fergusson, "kept five centuries in advance of the Roman Church in the invention and use of all the ceremonies and forms common to both religions."<sup>b</sup> Edmunds has shown in detail the astonishing parallelism between the Buddhist and the Christian gospels.<sup>c</sup> However, our knowledge of the beginnings of these customs and beliefs is too vague to warrant positive conclusions as to priority.

the mistake of supposing that the drama of religious ritual could be replaced with sermons and morality; and the victory of a Buddhism rich in myths, miracles, ceremonies and intermediating saints corresponds to the ancient and current triumph of a colorful and dramatic Catholicism over the austere simplicity of early Christianity and modern Protestantism.

That same popular preference for polytheism, miracles and myths which destroyed Buddha's Buddhism finally destroyed, in India, the Buddhism of the Greater Vehicle itself. For—to speak with the hindsight wisdom of the historian—if Buddhism was to take over so much of Hinduism, so many of its legends, its rites and its gods, soon very little would remain to distinguish the two religions; and the one with the deeper roots, the more popular appeal, and the richer economic resources and political support would gradually absorb the other. Rapidly superstition, which seems to be the very lifeblood of our race, poured over from the older faith to the younger one, until even the phallic enthusiasms of the *Shakti* sects found place in the ritual of Buddhism. Slowly the patient and tenacious Brahmans recaptured influence and imperial patronage; and the success of the youthful philosopher Shankara in restoring the authority of the *Vedas* as the basis of Hindu thought put an end to the intellectual leadership of the Buddhists in India.

The final blow came from without, and was in a sense invited by Buddhism itself. The prestige of the *Sangha*, or Buddhist Order, had, after Ashoka, drawn the best blood of Magadha into a celibate and pacific clergy; even in Buddha's time some patriots had complained that "the monk Gautama causes fathers to beget no sons, and families to become extinct."<sup>1</sup> The growth of Buddhism and monasticism in the first year of our era sapped the manhood of India, and conspired with political division to leave India open to easy conquest. When the Arabs came, pledged to spread a simple and stoic monotheism, they looked with scorn upon the lazy, venal, miracle-mongering Buddhist monks; they smashed the monasteries, killed thousands of monks, and made monasticism unpopular with the cautious. The survivors were re-absorbed into the Hinduism that had begotten them; the ancient orthodoxy received the penitent heresy, and "Brahmanism killed Buddhism by a fraternal embrace."<sup>2</sup> Brahmanism had always been tolerant; in all the history of the rise and fall of Buddhism and a hundred other sects we find much disputation, but no instance of persecution. On the contrary Brahmanism eased the return of the prodigal by proclaiming Buddha a god (as an



avatar of Vishnu), ending animal sacrifice, and accepting into orthodox practice the Buddhist doctrine of the sanctity of all animal life. Quietly and peacefully, after half a thousand years of gradual decay, Buddhism disappeared from India.\*

Meanwhile it was winning nearly all the remainder of the Asiatic world. Its ideas, its literature and its art spread to Ceylon and the Malay Peninsula in the south, to Tibet and Turkestan in the north, to Burma, Siam, Cambodia, China, Korea and Japan in the east; in this way all of these regions except the Far East received as much civilization as they could digest, precisely as western Europe and Russia received civilization from Roman and Byzantine monks in the Middle Ages. The cultural zenith of most of these nations came from the stimulus of Buddhism. From the time of Ashoka to its decay in the ninth century, Anuradhapura, in Ceylon, was one of the major cities of the Oriental world; the Bo-tree there has been worshiped for two thousand years, and the temple on the heights of Kandy is one of the Meccas of the 150,000,000 Buddhists of Asia.† The Buddhism of Burma is probably the purest now extant, and its monks often approach the ideal of Buddha; under their ministrations the 13,000,000 inhabitants of Burma have reached a standard of living considerably higher than that of India.† Sven Hedin, Aurel Stein and Pelliot have unearthed from the sands of Turkestan hundreds of Buddhist manuscripts, and other evidences of a culture which flourished there from the time of Kanishka to the thirteenth century A.D. In the seventh century of our era the enlightened warrior, Srong-tsan Gampo, established an able government in Tibet, annexed Nepal, built Lhasa as his capital, and made it rich as a halfway house in Chinese-Indian trade. Having invited Buddhist monks to come from India and spread Buddhism and education among his people, he retired from rule for four years in order to learn how to read and write, and inaugurated the Golden Age of Tibet. Thousands of monasteries were built in the mountains and on the great plateau; and a voluminous Tibetan canon of Buddhist books was published, in three hundred and thirty-three volumes, which preserved for modern scholarship many works whose Hindu originals

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\* Today there are in India proper only 3,000,000 Buddhists—one per cent of the population.

† The temple at Kandy contains the famous "eye-tooth of Buddha"—two inches long and an inch in diameter. It is enclosed in a jeweled casket, carefully guarded from the eyes of the people, and carried periodically in a solemn procession which draws Buddhists from every corner of the Orient. On the walls of the temple, frescoes show the gentle Buddha killing sinners in hell. The lives of great men all remind us how helplessly they may be transmogrified after their death.

have long been lost.<sup>8</sup> Here, eremitically sealed from the rest of the world, Buddhism developed into a maze of superstitions, monasticism and ecclesiasticism rivaled only by early medieval Europe; and the Dalai Lama (or "All-Embracing Priest"), hidden away in the great Potala monastery that overlooks the city of Lhasa, is still believed by the good people of Tibet to be the living incarnation of the *Bodhisattwa* Avalokiteshvara.<sup>9</sup> In Cambodia, or Indo-China, Buddhism conspired with Hinduism to provide the religious framework for one of the richest ages in the history of Oriental art. Buddhism, like Christianity, won its greatest triumphs outside the land of its birth; and it won them without shedding a drop of blood.

## II. THE NEW DIVINITIES

*Hinduism—Brahma, Vishnu, Shiva—Krishna—Kali—Animal gods  
—The sacred cow—Polytheism and monotheism*

The "Hinduism" that now replaced Buddhism was not one religion, nor was it only religion; it was a medley of faiths and ceremonies whose practitioners had only four qualities in common: they recognized the caste system and the leadership of the Brahmins, they revered the cow as especially representative of divinity, they accepted the law of *Karma* and the transmigration of souls, and they replaced with new gods the deities of the *Vedas*. These faiths had in part antedated and survived Vedic nature worship; in part they had grown from the connivance of the Brahmins at rites, divinities and beliefs unknown to the Scriptures and largely contrary to the Vedic spirit; they had boiled in the cauldron of Hindu religious thought even while Buddhism maintained a passing intellectual ascendancy.

The gods of Hinduism were characterized by a kind of anatomical superabundance vaguely symbolizing extraordinary knowledge, activity or power. The new Brahma had four faces, Kartikeya six; Shiva had three eyes, Indra a thousand; and nearly every deity had four arms.<sup>10</sup> At the head of this revised pantheon was Brahma, chivalrously neuter, acknowledged master of the gods, but no more noticed in actual worship than a constitutional monarch in modern Europe. Combined with him and Shiva in a triad—not a trinity—of dominant deities was Vishnu, a god of love who repeatedly became man in order to help mankind. His greatest incarnation was Krishna; as such he was born in a prison, had accomplished many marvels of heroism and romance, healed the deaf and the blind, helped lepers, championed the poor, and raised men from

the grave. He had a beloved disciple, Arjuna, before whom he was transfigured. He died, some say, by an arrow; others say by a crucifixion on a tree. He descended into hell, rose to heaven, and will return on the last day to judge the quick and the dead.<sup>14</sup>

To the Hindu there are three chief processes in life and the universe: creation, preservation and destruction. Hence divinity takes for him three main forms: Brahma the Creator, Vishnu the Preserver, and Shiva the Destroyer; these are the *Trimurti*, or "Three Shapes," which all Hindus but the Jains adore.\* Popular devotion is divided between Vaishnavism, the religion of Vishnu, and Shivaism, the religion of Shiva. The two cults are peaceful neighbors, and sometimes hold sacrifices in the same temple;<sup>15</sup> and the wise Brahmans, followed by a majority of the people, pay equal honor to both these gods. Pious Vaishnavites paint upon their foreheads every morning with red clay the trident sign of Vishnu; pious Shivaites trace horizontal lines across their brows with cow-dung ashes, or wear the *linga*—symbol of the male organ—fastened on their arms or hung from their necks.<sup>16</sup>

The worship of Shiva is one of the oldest, most profound and most terrible elements in Hinduism. Sir John Marshall reports "unmistakable evidence" of the cult of Shiva at Mohenjo-daro, partly in the form of a three-headed Shiva, partly in the form of little stone columns which he presumes to be as phallic as their modern counterparts. "Shivaism," he concludes, "is therefore the most ancient living faith in the world."<sup>17</sup> The name of the god is a euphemism; literally it means "propitious"; whereas Shiva himself is viewed chiefly as a god of cruelty and destruction, the personification of that cosmic force which destroys, one after another, all the forms that reality takes—all cells, all organisms, all species, all ideas, all works, all planets and all things. Never has another people dared to face the impermanence of forms, and the impartiality of nature, so frankly, or to recognize so clearly that evil balances good, that destruction goes step by step with creation, and that all birth is a capital crime, punishable with death. The Hindu, tortured with a thousand misfortunes and sufferings, sees in them the handiwork of a vivacious force that

\* In the census of 1921 the religions of India divided the population as follows: Hinduism, 216,261,000; Sikhs, 3,239,000; Jains, 1,178,000; Buddhists, 11,571,000 (nearly all in Burma and Ceylon); Zoroastrians (Parsees), 102,000; Moslems, 68,735,000; Jews, 22,000; Christians, 4,754,000 (chiefly Europeans).<sup>14</sup>

† Nevertheless the name of Shiva, like that of *Brahman* itself, cannot be found in the *Rig-veda*. Patanjali the grammarian mentions Shiva images and devotees ca. 150 B.C.<sup>16</sup>

appears to find pleasure in breaking down everything that Brahma—the creative power in nature—has produced. Shiva dances to the tune of a perpetually forming, dissolving and re-forming world.

Just as death is the penalty of birth, so birth is the frustration of death; and the same god who symbolizes destruction represents also, for the Hindu mind, that passion and torrent of reproduction which overrides the death of the individual with the continuance of the race. In some parts of India, particularly Bengal, this creative or reproductive energy (*Shakti*) of Shiva or nature is personified in the figure of Shiva's wife, Kali (Parvati, Uma, Durga), and is worshiped in one of the many *Shakti* cults. Until the last century this worship was a bloody ritual, often involving human sacrifice; latterly the goddess has been content with goats.<sup>9</sup> The deity is portrayed for the populace by a black figure with gaping mouth and protruding tongue, adorned with snakes and dancing upon a corpse; her earrings are dead men, her necklace is a string of skulls, her face and breasts are smeared with blood.<sup>10</sup> Two of her four hands carry a sword and a severed head; the other two are extended in blessing and protection. For Kali-Parvati is the goddess of motherhood as well as the bride of destruction and death; she can be tender as well as cruel, and can smile as well as kill; once, perhaps, she was a mother-goddess in Sumeria, and was imported into India before she became so terrible.<sup>11</sup> Doubtless she and her lord are made as horrible as possible in order that timid worshipers may be frightened into decency, and perhaps into generosity to the priests.\*

These are the greater gods of Hinduism; but they are merely five of thirty million deities in the Hindu pantheon; only to catalogue them would take a hundred volumes. Some of them are more properly angels, some are what we should call devils, some are heavenly bodies like the sun, some are mascots like *Lakshmi* (goddess of good luck), many of them are beasts of the field or fowl of the air. To the Hindu mind there was no real gap between animals and men; animals as well as men had souls, and souls were perpetually passing from men into animals, and back again; all these species were woven into one infinite web of *Karma* and reincarnation. The elephant, for example, became the god Ganesha, and was recognized as Shiva's son;<sup>12</sup> he personified man's animal nature, and at the same time his image served as a charm against evil fortune. Monkeys

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\* The priests of Shivaism, however, are seldom Brahmans; and the majority of the Brahmans look with scorn and regret upon the *Shakti* cult.<sup>13</sup>

and snakes were terrible, and therefore divine. The cobra or *naga*, whose bite causes almost immediate death, received especial veneration; annually the people of many parts of India celebrated a religious feast in honor of snakes, and made offerings of milk and plantains to the cobras at the entrance to their holes.<sup>26</sup> Temples have been erected in honor of snakes, as in eastern Mysore; great numbers of reptiles take up their residence in these buildings, and are fed and cared for by the priests.<sup>27</sup> Crocodiles, tigers, peacocks, parrots, even rats, receive their meed of worship.<sup>28</sup>

Most sacred of all animals to a Hindu is the cow. Images of bulls, in every material and size, appear in temples and homes, and in the city squares; the cow itself is the most popular organism in India, and has full freedom of the streets; its dung is used as fuel or a holy ointment; its urine is a sacred wine that will wash away all inner or outer uncleanness. Under no circumstances are these animals to be eaten by a Hindu, nor is their flesh to be worn as clothing—headgear or gloves or shoes; and when they die they are to be buried with the pomp of religious ritual.<sup>29</sup> Perhaps wise statesmanship once decreed this tabu in order to preserve agricultural draft animals for the growing population of India;<sup>30</sup> today, however, they number almost one-fourth as many as the population.<sup>31</sup> The Hindu view is that it is no more unreasonable to feel a profound affection for cows, and a profound revulsion at the thought of eating them, than it is to have similar feelings in regard to domestic cats and dogs; the cynical view of the matter is that the Brahmans believed that cows should never be slaughtered, that insects should never be injured, and that widows should be burned alive. The truth is that the worship of animals occurs in the history of every people, and that if one must deify any animal, the kind and placid cow seems entitled to her measure of devotion. We must not be too haughtily shocked by the menagerie of Hindu gods; we too have had our serpent-devil of Eden, our golden calf of the Old Testament, our sacred fish of the catacombs, and our gracious Lamb of God.

The secret of polytheism is the inability of the simple mind to think in impersonal terms; it can understand persons more readily than forces, wills more easily than laws.<sup>32</sup> The Hindu suspects that our human senses see only the outside of the events that they report; behind the veil of these phenomena, he thinks, there are countless superphysical beings whom, in Kant's phrase, we can only conceive but never perceive. A certain philosophical tolerance in the Brahmans has added to the teeming pantheon of India; local or tribal gods have been received into the Hindu Valhalla



FIG. 48.—*The Three-faced Shiva, or Trimurti, Elephanta*  
Underwood & Underwood

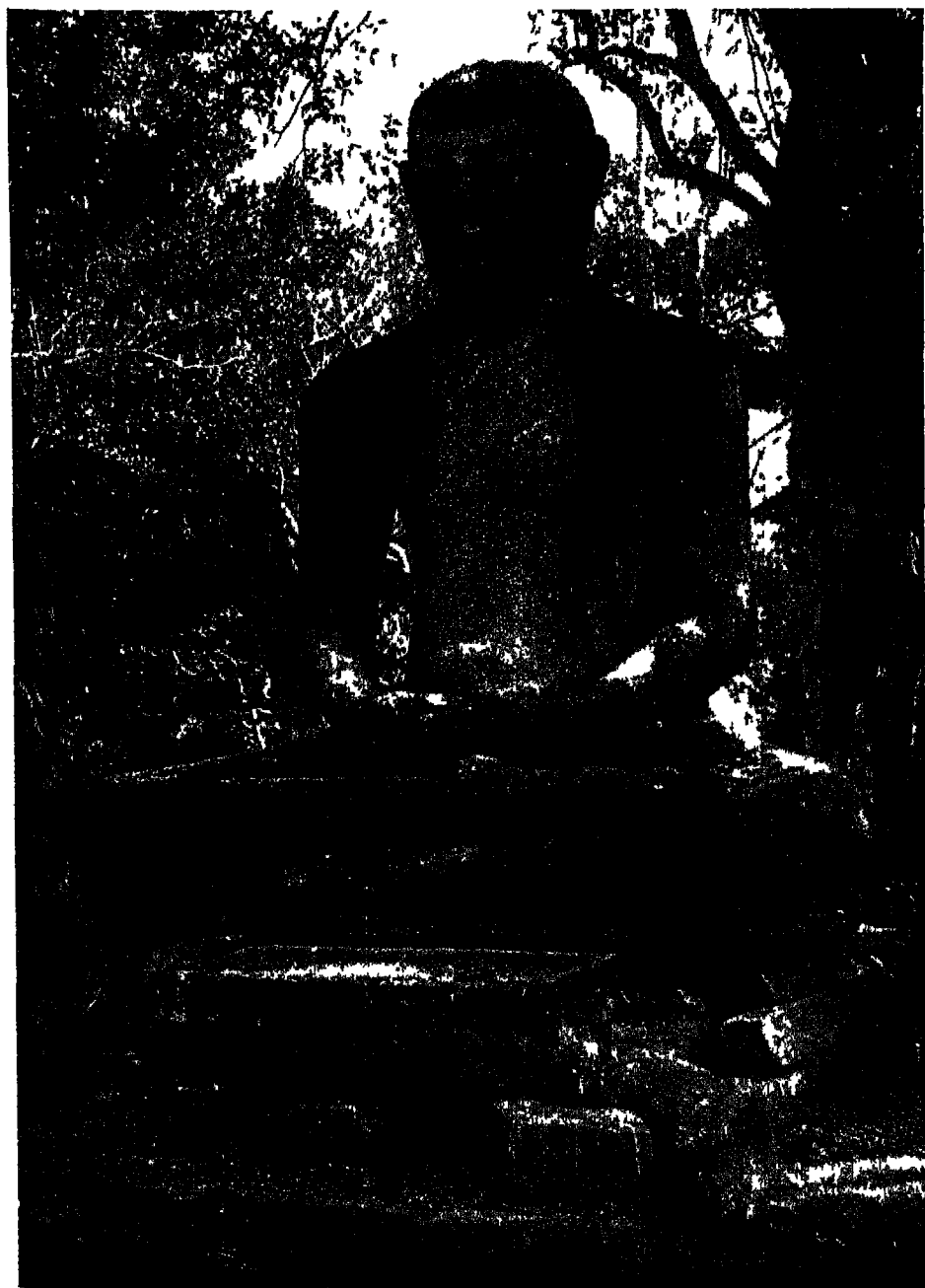


FIG. 49.—*The Buddha of Anuradhapura, Ceylon*  
Ewing Galloway, N. Y.

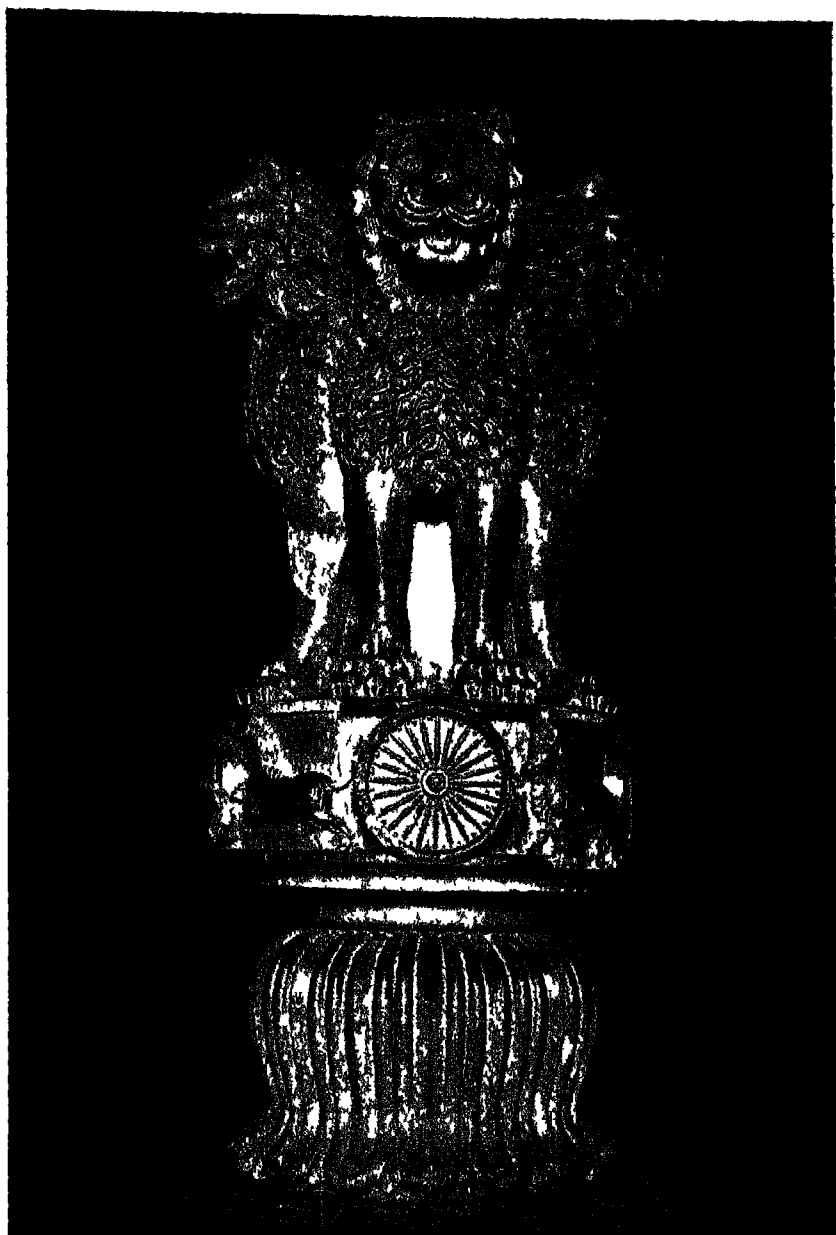


FIG. 50—*Lion capital of Ashoka column*  
Sarnath Museum, Benares; copyright Archaeological Survey of India



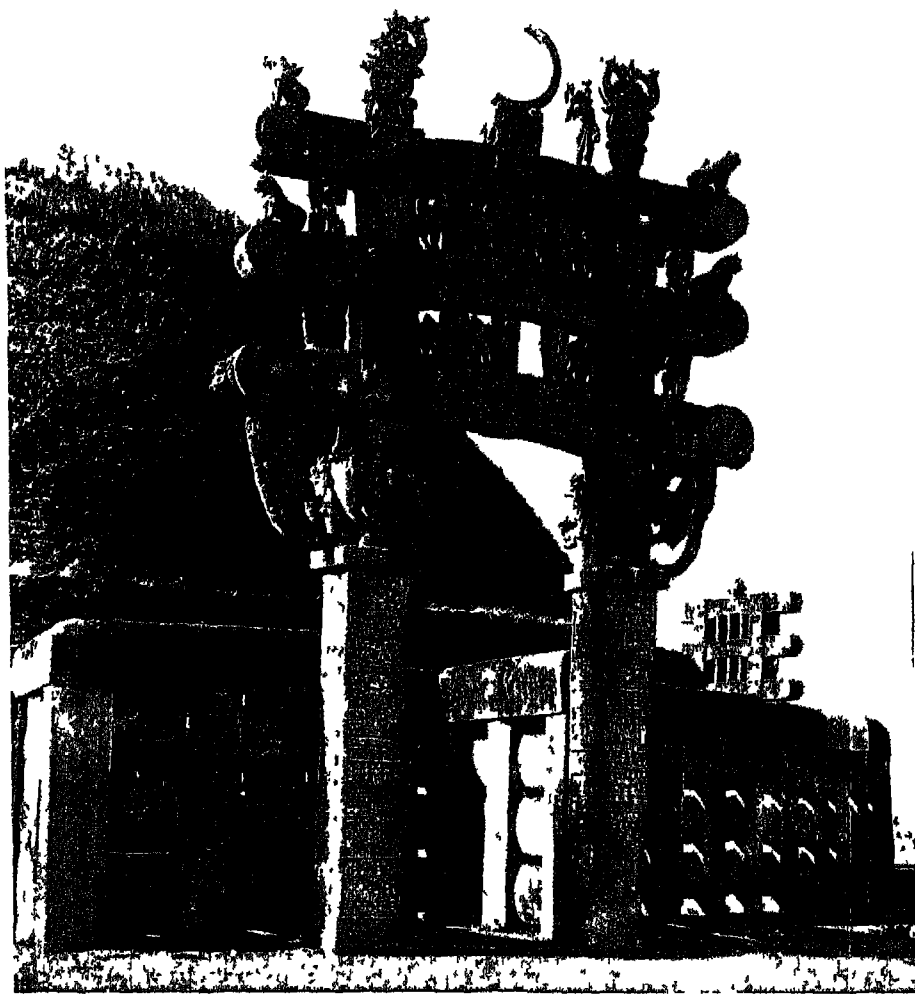


FIG. 51—*Sanchi Tope, north gate*  
Underwood & Underwood

by adoption, usually by interpreting them as aspects or avatars of accepted deities; every faith could get its credentials if it paid its dues. In the end nearly every god became a phase, attribute or incarnation of another god, until all these divinities, to adult Hindu minds, merged into one; polytheism became pantheism, almost monotheism, almost monism. Just as a good Christian may pray to the Madonna or one of a thousand saints, and yet be a monotheist in the sense that he recognizes one God as supreme, so the Hindu prays to Kali or Rama or Krishna or Ganesha without presuming for a moment that these are supreme deities.\* Some Hindus recognize Vishnu as supreme, and call Shiva merely a subordinate divinity; some call Shiva supreme, and make Vishnu an angel; if only a few worship Brahma it is because of its impersonality, its intangibility, its distance, and for the same reason that most churches in Christendom were erected to Mary or a saint, while Christianity waited for Voltaire to raise a chapel to God.

### III. BELIEFS

*The "Puranas" — The reincarnations of the universe — The migrations of the soul — "Karma" — Its philosophical aspects  
— Life as evil — Release*

Mingled with this complex theology is a complex mythology at once superstitious and profound. The *Vedas* having died in the language in which they were written, and the metaphysics of the Brahman schools being beyond the comprehension of the people, Vyasa and others, over a period of a thousand years (500 B.C.—500 A.D.), composed eighteen *Puranas*—"old stories"—in 400,000 couplets, expounding to the laity the exact truth about the creation of the world, its periodical evolution and dissolution, the genealogy of the gods, and the history of the heroic age. These books made no pretense to literary form, logical order, or numerical moderation; they insisted that the lovers Urvashi and Pururavas spent 61,000 years in pleasure and delight.<sup>60</sup> But through the intelligibility of their language, the attractiveness of their parables, and the orthodoxy of their doctrine they became the second Bible of Hinduism, the grand repository of its superstitions, its myths, even of its philosophy. Here, for example, in the *Vishnupurana*, is the oldest and ever-recurrent theme

\* Excerpt from the 1901 Census Report to the British Government of India: "The general result of my inquiries is that the great majority of Hindus have a firm belief in one Supreme Being."<sup>60</sup>

of Hindu thought—that individual separateness is an illusion, and that all life is one:

After a thousand years came Ribhu  
To Nidagha's city, to impart further knowledge to him.  
*He saw him outside the city*  
Just as the King was about to enter with a great train of attendants,  
Standing afar and holding himself apart from the crowd,  
His neck wizened with fasting, returning from the wood with fuel  
and grass.  
When Ribhu saw him, he went to him and greeted him and said:  
"O Brahman, why standest thou here alone?"  
Nidagha said: "Behold the crowd pressing about the King,  
Who is just entering the city. That is why I stand alone."  
Ribhu said: "Which of these is the King?  
And who are the others?  
Tell me that, for thou seemest informed."  
Nidagha said: "He who rides upon the fiery elephant, towering  
like a mountain peak,  
That is the King. The others are his attendants."  
Ribhu said: "These two, the King and the elephant, are pointed out  
by you  
Without being separated by mark of distinction;  
Give me the mark of distinction between them.  
I would know, which is here the elephant and which the King."  
Nidagha said: "The elephant is below, the King is above him;  
Who does not know the relationship of borne to bearer?"  
Ribhu said: "That I may know, teach me.  
What is that which is indicated by the word 'below', and what is  
'above'?"  
Straight Nidagha sprang upon the *Guru*,\* and said to him:  
"Hear now, I will tell thee what thou demandest of me:  
I am above like the King. You are below, like the elephant.  
For thy instruction I give thee this example."  
Ribhu said: "If you are in the position of the King, and I in that of  
the elephant,  
So tell me this still: Which of us is you, and which is I?"  
Then swiftly Nidagha, falling down before him, clasped his feet  
and spake:

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\* Teacher.

"Truly thou art Ribhu, my Master. . . .  
 By this I know that thou, my *Guru*, art come."  
 Ribhu said: "Yes, to give thee teaching,  
 Because of thy former willingness to serve me,  
 I, Ribhu by name, am come to thee.  
 And what I have just taught thee in short—  
 Heart of highest truth—that is complete non-duality."\*  
 When he had thus spoken to Nidagha the *Guru* Ribhu departed  
 thence.  
 But forthwith Nidagha, taught by this symbolic teaching, turned his  
 mind completely to non-duality.  
 All beings from thenceforth he saw not distinct from himself.  
 And so he saw *Brahman*. And thus he achieved the highest sal-  
 vation.<sup>41</sup>

In these *Puranas*, and kindred writings of medieval India, we find a very modern theory of the universe. There is no creation in the sense of Genesis; the world is perpetually evolving and dissolving, growing and decaying, through cycle after cycle, like every plant in it, and every organism. Brahma—or, as the Creator is more often called in this literature, Prajapati—is the spiritual force that upholds this endless process. We do not know how the universe began, if it did; perhaps, say the *Puranas*, Brahma laid it as an egg and then hatched it by sitting on it; perhaps it is a passing error of the Maker, or a little joke.<sup>42</sup> Each cycle or *Kalpa* in the history of the universe is divided into a thousand *mahayugas*, or great ages, of 4,320,000 years each; and each *mahayuga* contains four *yugas* or ages, in which the human race undergoes a gradual deterioration. In the present *mahayuga* three ages have now passed, totaling 4,888,888 years; we live in the fourth age, the *Kali-yuga*, or Age of Misery; 5035 years of this bitter era have elapsed, but 426,965 remain. Then the world will suffer one of its periodical deaths, and Brahma will begin another "day of Brahma," i.e., a *Kalpa* of 4,320,000,000 years. In each *Kalpa* cycle the universe develops by natural means and processes, and by natural means and processes decays; the destruction of the whole world is as certain as the death of a mouse, and, to the philosopher, not more important. There is no final purpose towards which the whole creation moves; there is no "progress"; there is only endless repetition.<sup>43</sup>

Through all these ages and great ages billions of souls have passed from species to species, from body to body, from life to life, in weary trans-

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\* *Advaitam*; this is the central word of Hindu philosophy; cf. page 549 below.

migration. An individual is not really an individual, he is a link in the chain of life, a page in the chronicle of a soul; a species is not really a separate species, for the souls in these flowers or fleas may yesterday have been, or tomorrow may be, the spirits of men; all life is one. A man is only partly a man, he is also an animal; shreds and echoes of past lower existences linger in him, and make him more akin to the brute than to the sage. Man is only a part of nature, not actually its center or master;\* a life is only a part of a soul's career, not the entirety; every form is transitory, but every reality is continuous and one. The many reincarnations of a soul are like years or days in a single life, and may bring the soul now to growth, now to decay. How can the individual life, so brief in the tropic torrent of generations, contain all the history of a soul, or give it due punishment and reward for its evil and its good? And if the soul is immortal, how could one short life determine its fate forever?\*

Life can be understood, says the Hindu, only on the assumption that each existence is bearing the penalty or enjoying the fruits of vice or virtue in some antecedent life. No deed small or great, good or bad, can be without effect; everything will out. This is the Law of *Karma*—the Law of the Deed—the law of causality in the spiritual world; and it is the highest and most terrible law of all. If a man does justice and kindness without sin his reward cannot come in one mortal span; it is stretched over other lives in which, if his virtue persists, he will be reborn into loftier place and larger good fortune; but if he lives evilly he will be reborn as an Outcaste, or a weasel, or a dog.<sup>86</sup>† This law of *Karma*, like the Greek *Moirai* or Fate, is above both gods and men; even the gods do not change its absolute operation; or, as the theologians put it, *Karma* and the will or action of the gods are one.<sup>88</sup> But *Karma* is not Fate; Fate implies the helplessness of man to determine his own lot; *Karma* makes him (taking all his lives as a whole) the creator of his own destiny. Nor do heaven and hell end the work of *Karma*, or the chain of births and deaths; the soul, after the death of the body, may go to hell for special punishment, or to heaven for quick and special reward; but no soul stays in hell, and few souls stay in heaven, forever; nearly every soul that enters them must

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\* When the Hindu is asked why we have no memory of our past incarnations, he answers that likewise we have no memory of our infancy; and as we presume our infancy to explain our maturity, so he presumes past existences to explain our place and fate in our present life.

† A monk explained his appetite on the ground that in a previous existence he had been an elephant, and *Karma* had forgotten to change the appetite with the body.<sup>86</sup> A woman of strong odor was believed to have been formerly a fish.<sup>87</sup>

sooner or later return' to earth, and live out its *Karma* in new incarnations.<sup>99\*</sup>

Biologically there was much truth in this doctrine. We *are* the reincarnations of our ancestors, and will be reincarnated in our children; and the defects of the fathers are to some extent (though perhaps not as much as good conservatives suppose) visited upon the children, even through many generations. *Karma* was an excellent myth for dissuading the human beast from murder, theft, procrastination, or offertorial parsimony; furthermore, it extended the sense of moral unity and obligations to all life, and gave the moral code an extent of application far greater, and more logical, than in any other civilization. Good Hindus do not kill insects if they can possibly avoid it; "even those whose aspirations to virtue are modest treat animals as humble brethren rather than as lower creatures over whom they have dominion by divine command."<sup>100</sup> Philosophically, *Karma* explained for India many facts otherwise obscure in meaning or bitterly unjust. All those eternal inequalities among men which so frustrate the eternal demands for equality and justice; all the diverse forms of evil that blacken the earth and redden the stream of history; all the suffering that enters into human life with birth and accompanies it unto death, seemed intelligible to the Hindu who accepted *Karma*; these evils and injustices, these variations between idiocy and genius, poverty and wealth, were the results of past existences, the inevitable working out of a law unjust for a life or a moment, but perfectly just in the end.† *Karma* is one of those many inventions by which men have sought to bear

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\* The Hindus believe in seven heavens, one of them on earth, the others rising in gradations above it; there are twenty-one hells, divided into seven sections. Punishment is not eternal, but it is diversified. Père Dubois' description of the Hindu hells rivals Dante's account of Inferno, and illustrates, like it, the many fears, and the sadistic imagination, of mankind. "Fire, steel, serpents, venomous insects, savage beasts, birds of prey, gall, poison, stench; in a word, everything possible is employed to torment the damned. Some have a cord run through their nostrils, by which they are forever dragged over the edges of extremely sharp knives; others are condemned to pass through the eye of a needle; others are placed between two flat rocks, which meet, and crush, without killing, them; others have their eyes pecked incessantly by famished vultures; while millions of them continually swim and paddle in a pool filled with the urine of dogs or with the mucus from men's nostrils."<sup>100</sup> Such beliefs were probably the privilege of the lowest Hindus and the strictest theologians. We shall find it easier to forgive them if we remember that our own Hell, unlike that of India, was not only varied, but eternal.

† The belief in *Karma* and transmigration is the greatest theoretical obstacle to the removal of the caste system from India; for the orthodox Hindu presumes that caste differences are decreed by the soul's conduct in past lives, and are part of a divine plan which it would be sacrilegious to disturb.

evil patiently, and to face life with hope. To explain evil, and to find for men some scheme in which they may accept it, if not with good cheer, then with peace of mind—this is the task that most religions have attempted to fulfill. Since the real problem of life is not suffering but undeserved suffering, the religion of India mitigates the human tragedy by giving meaning and value to grief and pain. The soul, in Hindu theology, has at least this consolation, that it must bear the consequences only of its own acts; unless it questions all existence it can accept evil as a passing punishment, and look forward to tangible rewards for virtue borne.

But in truth the Hindus do question all existence. Oppressed with an enervating environment, national subjection and economic exploitation, they have tended to look upon life as more a bitter punishment than an opportunity or a reward. The *Vedas*, written by a hardy race coming in from the north, were almost as optimistic as Whitman; Buddha, representing the same stock five hundred years later, already denied the value of life; the *Puranas*, five centuries later still, represented a view more profoundly pessimistic than anything known in the West except in stray moments of philosophic doubt.\* The East, until reached by the Industrial Revolution, could not understand the zest with which the Occident has taken life; it saw only superficiality and childishness in our merciless busyness, our discontented ambition, our nerve-racking labor-saving devices, our progress and speed; it could no more comprehend this profound immersion in the surface of things, this clever refusal to look ultimates in the face, than the West can fathom the quiet inertia, the "stagnation" and "hopelessness" of the traditional East. Heat cannot understand cold.

"What is the most wonderful thing in the world?" asks Yama of Yudishthira; and Yudishthira replies: "Man after man dies; seeing this, men still move about as if they were immortal."<sup>44</sup> "By death the world is afflicted," say the *Mahabharata*, "by age it is held in bar, and the nights

\* Schopenhauer, like Buddha, reduced all suffering to the will to live and beget, and advocated race suicide by voluntary sterility. Heine could hardly pen a stanza without speaking of death, and could write, in Hindu strain,

Sweet is sleep, but death is better;  
Best of all is never to be born.<sup>45</sup>

Kant, scorning the optimism of Leibnitz, asked: "Would any man of sound understanding who has lived long enough, and has meditated on the worth of human existence, care to go again through life's poor play, I do not say on the same conditions, but on any conditions whatever?"<sup>46</sup>

are the Unfailing Ones that are ever coming and going. When I know that death cannot halt, what can I expect from walking in a cover of lore?"<sup>46</sup> And in the *Ramayana* Sita asks, as her reward for fidelity through every temptation and trial, only death:

If in truth unto my husband I have proved a faithful wife,  
Mother Earth, relieve thy Sita from the burden of this life!<sup>47</sup>

So the last word of Hindu religious thought is *moksha*, release—first from desire, then from life. *Nirvana* may be one release or the other; but it is fullest in both. The sage Bhartri-hari expresses the first:

Everything on earth gives cause for fear, and the only freedom from fear is to be found in the renunciation of all desire. . . . Once upon a time the days seemed long to me when my heart was sorely wounded through asking favors from the rich; and yet again the days seemed all too short for me when I sought to carry out all my worldly desires and ends. But now as a philosopher I sit on a hard stone in a cave on the mountainside, and time and again I laugh when I think of my former life."

Gandhi expresses the second form of release: "I do not want to be reborn," he says.<sup>48</sup> The highest and final aspiration of the Hindu is to escape reincarnation, to lose that fever of ego which revives with each individual body and birth. Salvation does not come by faith, nor yet by works; it comes by such uninterrupted self-denial, by such selfless intuition of the part-engulfing Whole, that at last the self is dead, and there is nothing to be reborn. The hell of individuality passes into the haven and heaven of unity, of complete and impersonal absorption into *Brahman*, the soul or Force of the World.

#### IV. CURIOSITIES OF RELIGION

*Superstitions — Astrology — Phallic worship — Ritual — Sacrifice*  
*—Purification—The sacred waters*

Amid all this theology of fear and suffering, superstition—first aid from the supernatural for the minor ills of life—flourished with rank fertility. Oblations, charms, exorcisms, astrology, oracles, incantations, vows,



palmistry, divination, 2,728,812 priests, a million fortune-tellers, a hundred thousand snake-charmers, a million *fakirs*, *yogis* and other holy men—this is one part of the historic picture of India. For twelve hundred years the Hindus have had a great number of *Tantras* (manuals) expounding mysticism, witchcraft, divination and magic, and formulating the holy *mantras* (spells) by which almost any purpose might be magically attained. The Brahmans looked with silent contempt upon this religion of magic; they tolerated it partly because they feared that superstition among the people might be essential to their own power, partly, perhaps, because they believed that superstition is indestructible, dying in one form only to be reborn in another. No man of sense, they felt, would quarrel with a force capable of so many reincarnations.

The simple Hindu, like many cultured Americans,\* accepted astrology, and took it for granted that every star exercised a special influence over those born under its ascendancy.<sup>30</sup> Menstruating women, like Ophelia, were to keep out of the sunshine, for this might make them pregnant.<sup>31</sup> The secret of material prosperity, said the *Kaushitaki Upanishad*, is the regular adoration of the new moon. Sorcerers, necromancers and sooth-sayers, for a pittance, expounded the past and the future by studying palms, ordure, dreams, signs in the sky, or holes eaten into cloth by mice. Chanting the charms which only they knew how to recite, they laid ghosts, bemused cobras, enthralled birds, and forced the gods themselves to come to the aid of the contributor. Magicians, for the proper fee, introduced a demon into one's enemy, or expelled it from one's self; they caused the enemy's sudden death, or brought him down with an incurable disease. Even a Brahman, when he yawned, snapped his fingers to right and left to frighten away the evil spirits that might enter his mouth.<sup>32</sup> At all times the Hindu, like many European peasants, was on his guard against the evil eye; at any time he might be visited with misfortune, or death, magically brought upon him by his enemies. Above all, the magician could restore sexual vitality, or inspire love in any one for any one, or give children to barren women.<sup>33</sup>

There was nothing, not even *Nirvana*, that the Hindu desired so intensely as children. Hence, in part, his longing for sexual power, and his

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\* Cf. footnote to page 80 above.

† So the good European caps each sneeze with a benediction, originally to guard against the soul being ejected by the force of the expiration.

ritual adoration of the symbols of reproduction and fertility. Phallic worship, which has prevailed in most countries at one time or another, has persisted in India from ancient times to the twentieth century. Shiva was its deity, the phallus was its ikon, the *Tantras* were its *Talmud*. The *Shakti*, or energizing power, of Shiva was conceived sometimes as his consort Kali, sometimes as a female element in Shiva's nature, which included both male and female powers; and these two powers were represented by idols called *linga* or *yoni*, representing respectively the male or the female organs of generation.<sup>87</sup> Everywhere in India one sees signs of this worship of sex: in the phallic figures on the Nepalese and other temples in Benares; in the gigantic *lingas* that adorn or surround the Shivaite temples of the south; in phallic processions and ceremonies, and in the phallic images worn on the arm or about the neck. *Linga* stones may be seen on the highways; Hindus break upon them the cocoanuts which they are about to offer in sacrifice.<sup>88</sup> At the Rameshvaram Temple the *linga* stone is daily washed with Ganges water, which is afterwards sold to the pious,<sup>89</sup> as holy water or mesmerized water has been sold in Europe. Usually the phallic ritual is simple and becoming; it consists in anointing the stone with consecrated water or oil, and decorating it with leaves.<sup>90</sup>

Doubtless the lower orders in India derive some profane amusement from phallic processions;<sup>91</sup> but for the most part the people appear to find no more obscene stimulus in the *linga* or the *yoni* than a Christian does in the contemplation of the Madonna nursing her child; custom lends propriety, and time lends sanctity, to anything. The sexual symbolism of the objects seems long since to have been forgotten by the people; the images are now merely the traditional and sacred ways of representing the power of Shiva.<sup>92</sup> Perhaps the difference between the European and the Hindu conception of this matter arose from divergence in the age of marriage; early marriage releases those impulses which, when long frustrated, turn in upon themselves and beget prurience as well as romantic love. The sexual morals and manners of India are in general higher than those of Europe and America, and far more decorous and restrained. The worship of Shiva is one of the most austere and ascetic of all the Hindu cults; and the devoutest worshipers of the *linga* are the Lingayats—the most Puritanic sect in India.<sup>93</sup> “It has remained for our Western visitors,” says Gandhi, “to acquaint us with the obscenity of many prac-

tices which we have hitherto innocently indulged in. It was in a missionary book that I first learned that *Shivalingam* had any obscene significance at all."<sup>80</sup>

The use of the *linga* and the *yoni* was but one of the myriad rituals that seemed, to the passing and alien eye, not merely the form but half the essence of Indian religion. Nearly every act of life, even to washing and dressing, had its religious rite. In every pious home there were private and special gods to be worshiped, and ancestors to be honored, every day; indeed religion, to the Hindu, was a matter for domestic observances rather than for temple ceremonies, which were reserved for holydays. But the people rejoiced in the many feasts that marked the ecclesiastical year and brought them in great processions or pilgrimages to their ancient shrines. They could not understand the service there, for it was conducted in Sanskrit, but they could understand the idol. They decked it with ornaments, covered it with paint, and encrusted it with jewels; sometimes they treated it as a human being—awakened it, bathed it, dressed it, fed it, scolded it, and put it to bed at the close of the day.<sup>81</sup>

The great public rite was sacrifice or offering; the great private rite was purification. Sacrifice, to the Hindu, was no empty form; he believed that if no food was offered them the gods would starve to death.<sup>82</sup> When men were cannibals human sacrifices were offered in India as elsewhere; Kali particularly had an appetite for men, but the Brahmans explained that she would eat only men of the lower castes.<sup>83</sup> As morals improved, the gods had to content themselves with animals, of which great numbers were offered them. The goat was especially favored for these ceremonies. Buddhism, Jainism and *ahimsa* put an end to animal sacrifice in Hindustan,<sup>84</sup> but the replacement of Buddhism with Hinduism restored the custom, which survived, in diminishing extent, to our own time. It is to the credit of the Brahmans that they refused to take part in any sacrifice that involved the shedding of blood.<sup>85</sup>

Purification rites took many an hour of Hindu life, for fears of pollution were as frequent in Indian religion as in modern hygiene. At any moment the Hindu might be made unclean—by improper food, by offal, by the touch of a Shudra, an Outcaste, a corpse, a menstruating woman, or in a

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<sup>80</sup>Such human sacrifices were recorded as late as 1854.<sup>81</sup> It was formerly believed that devotees had offered themselves as sacrifices, as in the case of fanatics supposed to have thrown themselves under the wheels of the Juggernaut (Indian *Jagannath*) car;<sup>82</sup> but it is now held that the rare cases of such apparent self-sacrifice may have been accidents.<sup>83</sup>

hundred other ways. The woman herself, of course, was defiled by menstruation or childbirth; Brahmanical law required isolation in such cases, and complex hygienic precautions.\* After all such pollutions—or, as we should say, possible infections—the Hindu had to undergo ritual purification: in minor cases by such simple ceremonies as being sprinkled with holy water;† in major cases by more complicated methods, culminating in the terrible *Panchagavya*. This purification was decreed as punishment for violating important caste laws (e.g., for leaving India), and consisted in drinking a mixture of “five substances” from the sacred cow: milk, curds, ghee, urine and dung.‡

A little more to our taste was the religious precept to bathe daily; here again a hygienic measure, highly desirable in a semitropical climate, was clothed in a religious form for more successful inculcation. “Sacred” pools and tanks were built, many rivers were called holy, and men were told that if they bathed in these they would be purified in body and soul. Already in the days of Yuan Chwang millions bathed in the Ganges every morning;§ from that century to ours those waters have never seen the sun rise without hearing the prayers of the bathers seeking purity and release, lifting their arms to the holy orb, and calling out patiently, “Om, Om, Om.” Because Benares was near the junction of two sacred rivers, the Ganges and the Jumna, it became the Holy City of India, the goal of millions of pilgrims, the haven of old men and women come from every part of the country to bathe in the river, and so to face death sinless and clean. There is an element of awe, even of terror, in the thought that such men have come to Benares for two thousand years, and have gone down shivering into its waters in the winter dawn, and smelled with misgiving the flesh of the dead on the burning *ghats*, and uttered the same trusting prayers, century after century, to the same silent deities. The unresponsiveness of a god is no obstacle to his popularity; India believes as strongly today as ever in the gods that have so long looked down with equanimity upon her poverty and her desolation.

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\* Ghee is clarified butter. Urine, says the Abbé Dubois (1820), “is looked upon as most efficacious for purifying any kind of uncleanness. I have often seen superstitious Hindus following the cows to pasture, waiting for the moment when they could collect the precious liquid in vessels of brass, and carrying it away while still warm to their houses. I have also seen them waiting to catch it in the hollow of their hands, drinking some of it and rubbing their faces and heads with the rest.”¶ *De gustibus non disputandum.*

## V. SAINTS AND SCEPTICS

*Methods of sanctity — Heretics — Toleration — General view of Hindu Religion*

Saints seem more abundant in India than elsewhere, so that at last the visitor feels that they are a natural product of the country, like the poppy or the snake. Hindu piety recognized three main avenues to sanctity: *Jnana-yoga*, the Way of Meditation, *Karma-yoga*, the Way of Action, and *Bhakti-yoga*, the Way of Love. The Brahmins allowed for all three by their rule of the four *Ashramas*, or stages of sanctity. The young Brahmin was to begin as a *Brahmachari*, vowed to premarital chastity, to piety, study, truthfulness, and loving service of his *Guru* or teacher. After marriage, which he should not delay beyond his eighteenth year, he was to enter the second stage of Brahminical life as *Grihastha*, or householder, and beget sons for the care and worship of himself and his ancestors. In the third stage (now seldom practiced) the aspirant to sanctity retired with his wife to live as a *Vanaprastha*, or jungle-dweller, accepting hard conditions gladly, and limiting sexual relations to the begetting of children. Finally the Brahmin who wished to reach the highest stage might, in his old age, leave even his wife, and become a *Sannyasi*, or "abandoner" of the world; giving up all property, all money and all ties, he would keep only an antelope skin for his body, a staff for his hand, and a gourd of water for his thirst. He must smear his body with ashes every day, drink the Five Substances frequently, and live entirely by alms. "He must," says the Brahminical Rule, "regard all men as equals. He must not be influenced by anything that happens, and must be able to view with perfect equanimity even revolutions that overthrow empires. His one object must be to acquire that measure of wisdom and of spirituality which shall finally reunite him to the Supreme Divinity, from which we are separated by our passions and our material surroundings."<sup>171</sup>\*

In the midst of all this piety one comes occasionally upon a sceptical voice stridently out of tune with the solemnity of the normal Hindu note. Doubtless when India was wealthy, sceptics were numerous, for humanity doubts its gods most when it prospers, and worships them most when it is miserable. We have noted the Charvakas and other heretics of Buddha's time. Almost as old is a work called, in the sesquipedalian

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\* Dubois, sceptical of everything but his own myth, adds: "The greater number of these *sannyasin* are looked upon as utter impostors, and that by the most enlightened of their fellow-countrymen."<sup>172</sup>

fashion of the Hindus, *Shwasanvedyopanishad*, which simplifies theology into four propositions: (1) that there is no reincarnation, no god, no heaven, no hell, and no world; (2) that all traditional religious literature is the work of conceited fools; (3) that Nature the originator and Time the destroyer are the rulers of all things, and take no account of virtue or vice in awarding happiness or misery to men; and (4) that people, deluded by flowery speech, cling to gods, temples and priests, when in reality there is no difference between Vishnu and a dog.<sup>70</sup> With all the inconsistency of a Bible harboring Ecclesiastes, the Pali canon of Buddhism offers us a remarkable treatise, probably as old as Christianity, called "The Questions of King Milinda," in which the Buddhist teacher Nagasena is represented as giving very disturbing answers to the religious inquiries made of him by the Greco-Bactrian King Menander, who ruled northern India at the turn of the first century before Christ. Religion, says Nagasena, must not be made a mere way of escape for suffering men; it should be an ascetic search for sanctity and wisdom without presuming a heaven or a god; for in truth, this saint assures us, these do not exist.<sup>71</sup> *The Mahabharata* inveighs against doubters and atheists who, it tells us, deny the reality of souls, and despise immortality; such men, it says, "wander over the whole earth"; and it warns them of their future punishment by the horrible example of a jackal who explains his species by admitting that in a previous incarnation he had been "a rationalist, a critic of the *Vedas*, . . . a reviler and opposer of priests, . . . an unbeliever, a doubter of all."<sup>72</sup> The *Bhagavad-Gita* refers to heretics who deny the existence of a god and describe the world as "none other than a House of Lust."<sup>73</sup> The Brahmins themselves were often sceptics, but too completely so to attack the religion of the people. And though the poets of India are as a rule assiduously pious, some of them, like Kabir and Vemana, speak in defense of a very emancipated theism. Vemana, a South Indian poet of the seventeenth century, writes scornfully of ascetic hermits, pilgrimages, and caste:

The solitariness of a dog! the meditations of a crane! the chanting of an ass! the bathing of a frog! . . . How are you the better for smearing your body with ashes? Your thoughts should be set on God alone; for the rest, an ass can wallow in dirt as well as you. . . . The books called *Vedas* are like courtesans, deluding men, and wholly unfathomable; but the hidden knowledge of God is like an

honorable wife. . . . Will the application of white ashes do away with the smell of a wine-pot?—will a cord cast over your neck make you twice-born? . . . Why should we constantly revile the Pariah? Are not his flesh and blood the same as our own? And of what caste is He who pervades the Pariah? . . . He who says, "I know nothing" is the shrewdest of all.<sup>80</sup>

It is worthy of note that pronouncements of this kind could be made with impunity in a society mentally ruled by a priestly caste. Except for foreign repressions (and perhaps because of alien rulers indifferent to native theologies) India has enjoyed a freedom of thought far greater than that of the medieval Europe to which its civilization corresponds; and the Brahmans have exercised their authority with discrimination and lenience. They relied upon the conservatism of the poor to preserve the orthodox religion, and they were not disappointed. When heresies or strange gods became dangerously popular they tolerated them, and then absorbed them into the capacious caverns of Hindu belief; one god more or less could not make much difference in India. Hence there has been comparatively little sectarian animosity within the Hindu community, though much between Hindus and Moslems; and no blood has been shed for religion in India except by its invaders.<sup>81</sup> Intolerance came with Islam and Christianity; the Moslems proposed to buy Paradise with the blood of "infidels," and the Portuguese, when they captured Goa, introduced the Inquisition into India.<sup>82</sup>

If we look for common defining elements in this jungle of faiths, we shall find them in the practical unanimity of the Hindus in worshipping both Vishnu and Shiva, in reverencing the *Vedas*, the Brahmans, and the cow, and in accepting the *Mahabharata* and the *Ramayana* as no mere literary epics, but as the secondary scriptures of the race.<sup>83</sup> It is significant that the deities and dogmas of India today are not those of the *Vedas*; in a sense Hinduism represents the triumph of aboriginal Dravidic India over the Aryans of the Vedic age. As the result of conquest, spoliation and poverty, India has been injured in body and soul, and has sought refuge from harsh terrestrial defeat in the easy victories of myth and imagination. Despite its elements of nobility, Buddhism, like Stoicism, was a slave philosophy, even if voiced by a prince; it meant that all desire or struggle, even for personal or national freedom, should be abandoned, and that the ideal was a desireless passivity; obviously the exhausting heat

of India spoke in this rationalization of fatigue. Hinduism continued the weakening of India by binding itself, through the caste system, in permanent servitude to a priesthood; it conceived its gods in unmoral terms, and maintained for centuries brutal customs, like human sacrifice and suttee, which many nations had long since outgrown; it depicted life as inevitably evil, and broke the courage and darkened the spirit of its devotees; it turned all earthly phenomena into illusion, and thereby destroyed the distinction between freedom and slavery, good and evil, corruption and betterment. In the words of a brave Hindu, "Hindu religion . . . has now degenerated into an idol-worship and conventional ritualism, in which the form is regarded as everything, and its substance as nothing."<sup>1</sup> A nation ridden with priests and infested with saints, India awaits with unformulated longing her Renaissance, her Reformation, and her Enlightenment.

We must, however, keep our historical perspective in thinking of India; we too were once in the Middle Ages, and preferred mysticism to science, priestcraft to plutocracy—and may do likewise again. We cannot judge these mystics, for our judgments in the West are usually based upon corporeal experience and material results, which seem irrelevant and superficial to the Hindu saint. What if wealth and power, war and conquest, were only surface illusions, unworthy of a mature mind? What if this science of hypothetical atoms and genes, of whimsical protons and cells, of gases generating Shakespeares and chemicals fusing into Christ, were only one more *faith*, and one of the strangest, most incredible and most transitory of all? The East, resentful of subjection and poverty, may go in for science and industry at the very time when the children of the West, sick of machines that impoverish them and of sciences that disillusion them, may destroy their cities and their machines in chaotic revolution or war, go back, beaten, weary and starving, to the soil, and forge for themselves another mystic faith to give them courage in the face of hunger, cruelty, injustice and death. There is no humorist like history.



